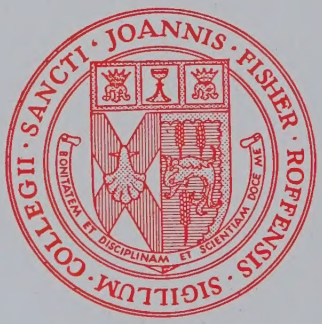

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LIFE OF JANE AUSTEN.

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OF

JANE AUSTEN.

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WALTER SCOTT, 24, WARWICK LANE

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LIFE OF JANE AUSTEN.

CHAPTER I.

MISS AUSTEN stands in literary history as one of a group of female novelists of manners, of which the other most prominent figures are Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Ferrier, while the whole group stands in contrast to the contemporary novelists of romance, such as the once famous Mrs. Radcliffe.[1] Of the novelists of manners the common parent, to a certain extent, was Richardson, while the novelists of romance had a precursor in the author of "The Castle of Otranto." But it is not in Miss Austen's relations to other writers or schools of writers that her importance consists. On her was bestowed, though in a humble form, the gift which had been bestowed on Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Scott, and a few others—the gift of creative power.

Short and simple are the annals of her life. Till near its close her genius was not recognized outside the circle

[1] Jane Austen's chronological relation to the other English novelists will be seen from the table at the end of the volume (p. 192).

of her own family, nor was it fully recognized till after her death. She had no literary acquaintance, and but a small acquaintance of any kind. Of her doings and sayings nobody took notes. Twenty years ago it was remarked in presence of one of her family that almost as little was known about her as about Shakespeare. Not long afterwards there appeared a memoir of her by her nephew, Mr. Austen-Leigh. It tells us her appearance, her general character and habits, but it tells us little more. There was probably little more to tell. The works are the only biography. Perhaps there might be some disappointment even in the case of Shakespeare if pious inquiry could succeed in rescuing details from the night in which they have been lost. Since the publication of the memoir, a collection of Jane Austen's letters has been given to the world by her grandnephew, Lord Brabourne. The genial industry of the editor has done all that could be done, but the letters, in a biographical point of view, are disappointing. These, however, with Lord Brabourne's introductions, are our only source of information beyond Mr. Austen-Leigh's Memoir, which forms the staple of this as of the other biographies.

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775—the year of the American Revolution—at the Parsonage House of Steventon, in Hampshire, of which parish, and of the neighbouring parish of Deane, her father, George Austen, was the rector. George Austen had been a fellow of St. John's College, Oxford. He was a good scholar, so that he was able to prepare two of his sons for the

University, and was noted for his good looks, having been called "the handsome Proctor." His wife and Jane Austen's mother was Cassandra, the youngest daughter of the Rev. Thomas Leigh, who, after being a fellow of All Souls', held the College living of Hampden, near Henley-on-Thames,—and niece of Dr. Theophilus Leigh, for more than half-a-century Master of Balliol College, and the great University wit of his day.

Jane had five brothers and one sister. Her eldest brother, James, was well read in English literature, was a writer in a modest way, and is believed to have had a large share in directing her reading and forming her taste. Her second brother, Edward, like Frank Churchill in "Emma," had been adopted by a wealthy relative, Mr. Knight, of Godmersham Park in Kent, and Chawton House in Hampshire, and on coming into possession of the property changed his name to Knight. Though he was separated from his sister in childhood, in later life they were drawn together, and a large share of her affections was given to him and to his children. He is described as very amiable and full of fun. The third brother, Henry, is said to have had great conversational powers, but not to have got on very well in life. He became a clergyman when middle-aged, and helped Jane in negotiations with the publishers. The two youngest brothers, Francis and Charles, were sailors, and served in the Great War. Both rose to the rank of Admiral; both seem to have deserved it; and both left a record of kindly and gentle character as well as of high professional spirit. The details of their profession, their prize-money, and their promotions, as well as the joy with

which they were welcomed home, have left plain traces on their sister's pages. But dearest of all, we are told, to the heart of Jane was her sister Cassandra, about three years her senior. They were always together, lived in the same home and shared the same bedroom till they were separated by death. Cassandra's was the calmer disposition, with less sunniness. Cassandra, it used to be said in the family, had the merit of having her temper always under command; but Jane had the happiness of possessing a temper that never required to be commanded. When "Sense and Sensibility" came out, the two sisters were identified with Elinor and Marianne; but Jane could never have painted herself as the foolishly emotional and impulsive Marianne; if she had, she would certainly have done herself great injustice. Mr. Austen-Leigh remarks that the young woman who before the age of twenty could so clearly discern the failings of Marianne Dashwood, can hardly have been subject to them herself. Sisterly love had probably a share in suggesting the loving pair of sisters in "Sense and Sensibility," as well as the loving pair of sisters in "Pride and Prejudice," and the want of a sister in "Emma."

Twenty-five years, more than half Jane Austen's life, were spent in Steventon Parsonage. Steventon is a small village upon the chalk hills of North Hants, in a winding valley, seven miles from Basingstoke. There is always a cheerfulness about the chalk country, and Steventon is described as pretty on a small scale and in a very quiet way, without large timber, but with broad and leafy hedgerows, beneath which grew the

primrose, the anemone, and the wild hyacinth. The hedgerows were not mere fences, but were of the amplitude usual in the days of unimproved husbandry, with a rough path down the middle: in "Persuasion" the conversation of a pair walking along one of them is overheard by an anxious listener on the outside. The parsonage, since pulled down, "stood in a shallow valley, surrounded by sloping meadows well sprinkled with elm trees, at the end of a small village of cottages, each well provided with a garden, scattered about prettily on either side of the road." On the south side was an old-fashioned garden, and along the garden ran a terrace of turf which Mr. Austen-Leigh says may have been in his aunt's thoughts when she described Catherine Morland's childish delight in rolling down the green slope at the back of the house. Not far off was a manor-house of the time of Henry VIII., which, however, does not seem to have turned Jane's thoughts to the romantic past.

In and around Steventon, and in the little town of Basingstoke, which probably is the original of Meryton, Jane would see the classes of people and the life which a village and a little country town in England presents. She would see the large landed proprietor and member of Parliament, like Sir Thomas Bertram, the small proprietor, like Mr. Bennet and Mr. Woodhouse, and the clergyman, with their wives and daughters, occasionally the military or naval officer of good family, the old lady not of good family, or retired tradesman, living in the little town, the village apothecary, the independent yeoman, like Robert Martin, common in those days

though now almost extinct. These are the materials of her novels. If the range of her characters was limited, she would have good opportunities of studying them, for English life, which has now become migratory and restless, in days before railways was quiet and stationary. In one of her letters, Jane says to a neophyte in novel-making, "You are now collecting your people delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life. Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on; and I hope you will write a great deal more and make very full use of them when they are so favourably arranged." The Austen family were not rich, but they were sufficiently well off to go into the society of the neighbourhood and keep a carriage. Their social position was much the same as that of Dr. and Mrs. Grant in "Mansfield Park," who keep their carriage and entertain, spreading their table with a liberality which seems excessive to the jealous Mrs. Norris.

The Austen circle was enlarged in every sense by intimacy with two cousins, Edward and Jane Cooper, the children of Mrs. Austen's eldest sister and Dr. Cooper, the vicar of Sonning, near Reading, and about eighteen miles from Basingstoke. Edward Cooper had won the prize for a Latin poem at Oxford, and afterwards wrote a work on prophecy, called "The Crisis," and several volumes of sermons, which at one time were in vogue. He no doubt read with pleasure the passage in "Mansfield Park" extolling the gifts of preaching. The Coopers lived for some time in Bath, where, it appears, Jane Austen visited them and acquired the know-

ledge of the great watering-place which enabled her to write "Northanger Abbey." She also visited her kinsman, Mr. Knight, at Godmersham Park, and perhaps it was there, more than at Steventon, that she studied the life of the county magnate, the Sir Thomas Bertram of "Mansfield Park."

It seems that the family circle in Steventon Parsonage was entirely united and happy, so that the home influences under which the girl grew up, combined with the natural sweetness of disposition of which her kinsman retains a vivid recollection, gave her a genial view of life, and inclined her to play gently with the foibles of humanity. Jane loved company and all the simple pleasures of life, flirting in a quiet way not excepted. "There were twenty dances," she says, when she had been at a ball, "and I danced them all without any fatigue;" and this was when she was so far past the heyday of youth as to wear a cap. She does not conceal her enjoyment of good cheer. She had a sweet voice, sang simple airs, and played on the piano. There is not a greater contrast between the bleak Westmoreland moor and the soft beauty of the Hampshire valley, than there was between the youth of the authoress of "Jane Eyre" and the youth of Jane Austen.

Nor was Jane Austen without a share of the happiness which goes with good looks. Her figure was tall and slender, her step was light and firm, and her whole appearance, we are told, was expressive of health and animation. In complexion she was a clear brunette with a rich colour; she had full, round cheeks, with mouth and nose small and well formed, bright hazel

eyes, and brown hair forming natural curls close round her face. Such is the portrait drawn of her by her affectionate kinsman. To a less partial observer the cheeks appeared rather too round and full.

It has seemed curious that no attachment should have been formed by a good-looking girl, fond of society and balls, and not averse from flirting. Mr. Austen-Leigh says in his first edition that he has no tale of love to relate. In his second edition he has introduced a double qualification of this statement. He tells us that his aunt in youth declined the addresses of a man who had the recommendations of good character, connections, and position, of everything but the power of touching her heart. But he also says that there is one passage of romance in her history with which he is imperfectly acquainted, but which he has on the authority of her sister Cassandra, who deposed that at some seaside place they became acquainted with a gentleman whose charm of person, mind, and manners was such that Cassandra thought him worthy to possess and likely to win her sister's love. When they parted, he expressed his intention of soon seeing them again, and Cassandra felt no doubt as to his motives. But they never again met, and within a short time he suddenly died. A Quarterly Reviewer has observed, concerning the attachment of Fanny Price in "Mansfield Park" to Edmund Bertram: "The silence in which this passion is cherished, the slender hopes and enjoyments by which it is fed, the restlessness and jealousy with which it fills a mind naturally active, contented, and unsuspicious, the manner in which it tinges every event and every reflection, are

painted with a vividness and a minuteness of which we can scarcely conceive any one but a female, and we should almost add a female writing from recollection, capable." Mr. Austen-Leigh, however, is of opinion that this conjecture, however probable, is wide of the mark, and that Fanny's love of Edmund was drawn from the intuitive perceptions of genius, not from personal experience. He has no reason, he says, to think that his aunt ever felt any attachment by which the happiness of her life was at all affected. There is little use in bandying conjectures when we have no evidence of facts. Yet it may be remarked in reply to Mr. Austen-Leigh, that if Jane Austen had felt such an attachment, and supposing the attachment to be unrequited or baffled by adverse circumstances, she would not have betrayed it. Complete command over her feelings in such a case is a characteristic which she holds up to admiration in two of her models of womanhood, Fanny Price and Elinor Dashwood. It is not in "Mansfield Park" that, if we were inclined to follow up this chase of an imaginary love affair, we should look for the trail. It is rather in the passage in "Persuasion" concerning the lingering attachment of Anne Elliot to Captain Wentworth, after the breaking off of their engagement.

"More than seven years were gone since this little history of sorrowful interest had reached its close; and time had softened down much, perhaps nearly all of peculiar attachment to him, but she had been too dependent on time alone; no aid had been given in change of place (except in one visit to Bath soon after the rupture), or in any novelty or enlargement of society. No one had ever come within the Kellynch circle who could bear a comparison with Frederick Wentworth, as he stood in her memory. No second

attachment, the only thoroughly natural, happy, and sufficient cure, at her time of life, had been possible to the nice tone of her mind, the fastidiousness of her taste, in the small limits of the society around them.

* * * * * * *

"How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been! how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence! She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older: the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning."

Captain Wentworth is a sailor. Jane had two brothers in the navy, and she could hardly fail to become acquainted with some of their brother officers. However, she is almost as impersonal as Shakespeare, and any attempt to extract her own history from her novels must be precarious in the highest degree. Cassandra was engaged to a young clergyman, who, before their marriage-day came, died in the West Indies. This may have furnished the cue for the passage in "Persuasion," if that passage had any relation to facts. There was certainly nothing serious in the case of Tom Lefroy, of whom Jane writes, "At length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, and when you receive this it will be over. My tears flow as I write at the melancholy idea."

An acute female critic has surmised that so observant a young lady with so sharp a pen must have been rather an object of dread than of affection to the people about her. Of the sharp pen the people of Steventon could not be in dread, inasmuch as it was not till many years after that any of its works were given to the world, and none but

Jane's own family at this time knew that she was an authoress. The gift of social satire is perhaps one not easily concealed, but we are assured that Jane was on a friendly footing with all around her and interested in their concerns, as she certainly was dearly loved, and deserved to be dearly loved, by her own family. Though satirical, she was not in the least cynical or malicious. Shakespeare must have been always taking notes, yet he was "Sweet Will" to the set in which he lived.

If the range of Jane's social experience was limited, so, apparently, was her literary culture. She was no doubt well read in English classics, especially in the line of fiction. Richardson, her nephew tells us, she knew thoroughly and greatly admired: she had a narrow escape of being seduced into imitation of him. Cowper she loved both in verse and prose. A man who cannot be animated by Cowper, she makes one of her characters say, cannot be animated at all. Crabbe she loved apparently still more, for she used to say that if ever she married at all she could fancy being Mrs. Crabbe. She was taken no doubt by the intense reality of his pictures, as well as by their minute and highly-finished detail. Once or twice she seems to have reproduced his thoughts. The following, for instance, reminds us of "The Lover's Ride:" "Emma's spirits were mounted up quite to happiness; everything wore a different air; James and his horses seemed not half so sluggish as before. When she looked at the hedges she thought that the elder at least must soon be coming out; and when she turned to Harriet she saw something like a look of spring, a tender smile even there."

To Johnson, whose strong sense must have been congenial to her, Jane paid homage without being influenced by his style. Of the *Spectator* she speaks with little regard, calling it "a voluminous publication, hardly any part of which would not, either by its matter or manner, disgust a young person of taste," and designating its language as "so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it." The last remark brings home to us the improvement that had taken place in the tone of society since the days when the *Spectator* was the height of refinement and a great organ of social reform. She read Scott and Byron, and she speaks of the question between the two as the burning literary issue of the day, without intimating her own opinion. From a passage in "Persuasion," it appears that Byron's passion had touched her. In one of her letters she says that she has begun "Marmion," and is disappointed by it; but she is constrained to recognize the excellence of "Waverley," though she playfully complains of its writer for not being content with his own realm of poetry, but encroaching on the realm of fiction and taking the bread out of a novelist's mouth. Her contemporary female novelists of course she read, and she stands up for the authoress of "Camilla." She defends the study of history against those who called it dry and dull. Henry appears to have been the writer whom she studied for the history of her own country. She read French, but of her French reading there is barely a trace. Voltaire and Rousseau were not likely to find their way to the book-shelves of an English parsonage. At all events there is not a vestige either in Jane Austen's novels or in

her letters of the influence of either. Nor is there a vestige of any of the writers, revolutionary or anti-revolutionary, who dealt with the great intellectual movements of the age. In her published letters, the allusions to any literary subject are surprisingly few and slight. One book which she mentions as greatly interesting her, strange to say, is an essay on the "Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire," by Capt. Pasley, of the Engineers. It has been already said that she had no literary friends. There was nothing to stimulate, nothing to sophisticate or spoil her. No primrose or wild hyacinth on the banks of Steventon ever unfolded more freely, or drew its life more entirely from its native sod.

A passage in "Mansfield Park" about the wonders of memory, and another about the contrast between evergreens and other trees as an instance of the marvels of nature, show that the mind of Jane Austen was sometimes turned to the mysteries of being; but of philosophic or scientific study not a trace appears. She widely differed in this, as in other respects, from George Eliot.

The circle of the Parsonage was literary in an unpretending way. It sometimes indulged in private theatricals, like the party in "Mansfield Park," the barn forming the usual theatre. The principal part in these performances was taken by a cousin, the daughter of Mr. Austen's only sister, who had married a French Count, and, when he had perished by the guillotine, was taken into her uncle's family and ultimately married Henry Austen. It was from this lady, it seems, that Jane got her knowledge of French. That her attention was at all turned to France,

or that her interest was excited in the tremendous drama which was going on there, does not appear. Reading aloud seems also to have been a favourite diversion: at least Jane Austen makes a great point of perfection in it, and in "Mansfield Park" Henry Crawford is represented as almost producing an impression on the obdurate heart of Fanny by his admirable rendering of Shakespeare.

Jane had from her childhood a taste for writing tales, and her nephew tells us that there is extant an old copybook containing some which seem to have been composed when she was quite a girl. She afterwards advised a niece who had literary aspirations not to write any more till she had turned sixteen, remarking that it would have been better for herself if she had read more and written less before reaching that mature age. Between these childish productions and the earliest of the published works intervened, it seems, some burlesques which, ridiculing the improbable accidents and extravagant sentiments of the silly romances of the day, were precursors of "Northanger Abbey." But it is also evident that, besides her taste for constructing stories and composition, Jane at a surprisingly early age had formed a taste for studying characters, especially "intricate" characters, as she calls them, and at the same time a habit of taking up the position of an observant spectator of her little social world. In this respect the three earliest of her published works are the greatest marvels of literary history. "Pride and Prejudice," which has been generally thought her masterpiece, was begun in October, 1796, before she was twenty-one years old, and completed in about ten months from that date. "Sense and Sensi-

bility" was begun in its present form immediately afterwards, in November, 1797; though if the material of a tale previously composed under the title of "Elinor and Marianne" was worked up into it, as is probable, it may be considered to that extent an earlier production than "Pride and Prejudice." "Northanger Abbey," though not prepared for the press till 1803, was first composed, as Mr. Austen-Leigh assures us, in 1798. The first two works lay for some time on the writer's hands, and may possibly have been revised, though there is no reason for suspecting it; but "Northanger Abbey" we certainly have in its original form. "Northanger Abbey" is eminently playful, but in no other respect do these, the work of a girl just out of her teens, differ from the most mature productions of the same writer. The insight into character and the tone of quiet irony and gentle cynicism, as well as the creative power, are the same. So are the minuteness of detail, the perfect finish, the quiet, limpid, unimpassioned style which never interposes the writer between the reader and the subject.

How did the world receive these works which now charm its highest minds? "Pride and Prejudice" was offered by the writer's father to a publisher, who declined the offer by return of post. It is due to his shade to say that he evidently had not seen the manuscript. "Northanger Abbey" was sold in 1803 for ten pounds to a publisher in Bath, who on inspection thought it so unpromising a venture that he let it lie for many years in his drawers, and was then glad to sell it back for the sum which he had given for it.

She who could write such novels must have been

conscious of their value, and was to be pitied during the years of apparently hopeless neglect. But the disappointment does not seem to have weighed in the slightest degree upon her spirits, or to have clouded her view of the world; nor does she ever glance at it either in her novels or in her letters. In the meantime she had joy in the work of her hands. She loved the creations of her fancy as though they had been real persons. She looked about the picture-galleries for portraits of her principal characters; she would give little pieces of confidential information about them as though she had actually lived among them. She told her nephew and nieces that Anne Steele never succeeded in catching the doctor, that Kitty Bennet was satisfactorily married to a clergyman near Pemberley, while Mary obtained nothing higher than one of her uncle Philip's clerks, and was content to be considered a star in the society of Meryton; that the "considerable sum" given by Mr. Norris to William Price was one pound; and that the letters placed by Frank Churchill before Jane Fairfax, which she swept away unread, contained the word "pardon." She feels the charm of Elizabeth in "Pride and Prejudice" as if she had met her in society. She was moved to write not by desire of money, of which she received lamentably little, or of fame, of which after all she reaped a very scanty harvest, but by the sense of her gifts, by the pleasure of exerting them, by the desire of amusing herself, her family, and perhaps others, by genuine interest in character and life. Works of genius are none the worse because they are wrought for money; Shakespeare wrote

for money, and so did Scott: but there is a charm in the perfectly spontaneous and unbought production. You are sure that there will be no padding or scamping; there is none of either in the works of Jane Austen.

Besides, though novel-writing was her delight, it was not her life. She had a domestic and social life independent of it, and full both of enjoyment and duty. Of this her letters are proof enough. People could see her constantly without guessing that she was an authoress. It is recorded that she did not shut herself up to write, but wrote sitting in the family circle amidst its various interruptions. Probably she was writing down what she had before composed in her mind, so that the explanation is the same as that of the apparent rapidity with which poetry was written by Scott. She excelled, we are told, in everything which she undertook. Her mother called her an excellent housekeeper. Her needlework, both plain and fancy, was first-rate, and a "housewife" made for a sister-in-law, which remains as a specimen of it, is described as showing a finish not less delicate than that of her compositions, and as being like the gift of a fairy. We are told that she spent much time in these occupations, and that some of her merriest talk was over clothes which she and her companions were making, sometimes for themselves and sometimes for the poor. Her handwriting is very clear, with all the letters perfectly formed; and without being masculine it is strong.

As time went on, nephews and nieces came to enlarge the circle of her interests and affections. Children were

irresistibly drawn to her. One of her nieces says, "As a very little girl I was always creeping up to Aunt Jane, and following her whenever I could in the house and out of it. I might not have remembered this but for the recollection of my mother's telling me privately that I must not be troublesome to my aunt. Her first charm to children was great sweetness of manner. She seemed to love you, and you felt you loved her in return. This, as well as I can now recollect, was what I felt in my early days before I was old enough to be amused by her cleverness. But soon came the delight of her playful talk. She could make everything amusing to a child. Then, as I got older, when cousins came to share the entertainment, she would tell us the most delightful stories, chiefly of Fairyland, and her fairies had all characters of her own. The tale was invented, I am sure, at the moment, and was continued for two or three days if occasion served." Another niece bears her testimony to the same effect, noting especially the delightfulness of her "long, circumstantial stories."

In 1801, when Jane was twenty-five, her father, growing old, made over his clerical duties to his son, who was to succeed him in the living, and went to live at Bath, then a favourite residence for retired clergymen, as well as for dowagers of other kinds. Jane therefore had to bid farewell to Steventon, to the haunts of her youth, to the old garden with its terrace, and to the green lanes bright with wild flowers, along which she had rambled composing her tales. "Dear, dear Norland," says Marianne in "Sense and Sensibility," as she wanders alone before the house on the evening

before departure, "when shall I cease to regret you!—when learn to feel a home elsewhere! Oh! happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, whence perhaps I may view you no more! And you, ye well-known trees!—but you will continue the same. No leaf will decay because we are removed, nor any branch become motionless because we can observe you no longer! No, you will continue the same; unconscious of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, and insensible of any change in those who walk under your shade! But who will remain to enjoy you?" So perhaps felt Jane Austen on her last evening at Steventon.

Bath opened to her observation a larger world; and it was a world which was brought fairly under the eye of the observer, since society, over which the spirit of Beau Nash still hovered, evidently retained in those days a good deal of its unity, the company meeting every evening in the public rooms. Yet during the four years which Jane Austen spent at Bath, she wrote nothing, except, perhaps, the fragment of "The Watsons;" and though Bath is partly the scene of "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion," and we get in those novels a general picture of the manners and customs of the great watering-place, there is not among the personages of either any character which bears a local stamp. They are still taken from the class of the rural gentry and clergy, Bath being merely the scene on which they met. Of resident society there was probably not much, and casual visitors would not afford Jane Austen opportunities for the minute and patient study of character which was the secret of

her art. Evidently she enjoyed Bath. She scoffs at the people who affected to think it tiresome after six weeks, yet came regularly every winter, lengthening their six weeks into ten or twelve, and went away at last because they could afford to stay no longer. Perhaps after a gay evening at the Rooms, and a bantering conversation with some pleasant partner, like Mr. Henry Tilney, it was with her as it was with Catherine Morland—"her spirits danced within her as she danced in her chair all the way home." Her enjoyment of the social life may account for the inaction of her pen. Her mind, no doubt, was still at work, and she was still gathering materials. She was not under the fell necessity of writing without inspiration, or before her creations were matured, to produce monthly instalments of a serial. From Bath she visited Lyme, which she afterwards made the scene of an episode in "Persuasion."

In 1805 her father died, and she, with her mother and sister, removed to Southampton, which was their residence till 1809. They had a large old-fashioned house in Castle Square, with a garden bounded by the city wall. Southampton was a social centre, and part of Castle Square was occupied by the castellated mansion of the Marquis of Lansdowne, whose Marchioness driving out in a phaeton with eight ponies, decreasing in size from the wheelers to the leaders, may have afforded to a gentle satirist at the window opposite food for mirth and reflection.

It was probably from Southampton that she visited Portsmouth, and saw and enjoyed the beauty of the sea-piece on some day when, "though it was really March, it

was April with its mild air, brisk, soft wind, and bright sun occasionally clouded for a minute, when everything looked beautiful under the influence of such a sky, with the shadows pursuing each other on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond; the sea at high water, ever varying in its hues, dancing in its glee, and dashing with a fine sound against the ramparts." She saw also the social life of naval officers ashore, and other denizens of the great military port, but apparently did not enjoy it. At least she makes Fanny in "Mansfield Park" find no society in Portsmouth that could afford her the smallest satisfaction. "The men appeared to her all coarse, the women all pert, everybody underbred, and she gave as little contentment as she received from introductions either to old or new acquaintance." This sounds like the verdict of personal experience.

At Lyme she had gone to the balls, danced, and talked in her letters about her dances and her partners. But now she was fast outliving the chance of marriage, and must have begun to look forward to being an old maid, though in one of her novels she has intimated that a woman may be handsomer than ever at twenty-nine. It is clear that she thought marriage the happier state. Mrs. John Knightley, in "Emma," passing her life with a husband and children on whom she doted, is her "model of right feminine happiness." But she took a placid and sensible view of her own destiny. "You will be an old maid," says Harriet to Emma, "and that's so dreadful." "Never mind," Emma replies, "I shall not be a poor old maid, and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single

woman with a very narrow income must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid, the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else." Jane's practical good sense adds that the world is not so far wrong as appears at first, inasmuch as a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind and sour the temper. Nephews and nieces growing up around Jane Austen supplied her with a substitute for one element at least of Mrs. John Knightley's wedded happiness.

Both she and her sister took rather early to wearing the cap which was the symbol of middle age. What one did the other was sure to do, for the two were so completely one in soul, that it was said that if Cassandra were to be beheaded, Jane would insist upon being beheaded too. Jane gives as her reason for taking to caps that they saved her a world of torment in hairdressing, which in those days was a fearful sacrifice to the tyranny of fashion. It was, however, in the character of both sisters. Both of them were neat, but neither of them was thought to pay attention to what was fashionable or becoming; yet in the Letters it does not appear to the male mind that millinery is overlooked. Already, in one of the earliest of her works, Jane had playfully warned her sex that to dress for the admiration of men is vain, that the male heart distinguishes not between the different kinds of muslin, the spotted, the sprigged, the mull or the jaconet. "Woman," she says, "is fine for her own satisfaction alone: no man will admire her the more, no woman will like her the better for it.

Neatness and fashion are enough for the former, and a something of shabbiness or impropriety will be most endearing to the latter." The last words are pretty sharp for a girl of twenty-one. The upshot seems to be that women dress not for anybody, but against each other.

In 1809, Jane, then thirty-four, with her mother and sister left Southampton, and went to live at a cottage provided by her brother, Edward Knight, close to his residence of Chawton, near Winchester, and not far from Steventon, Jane's old home. Chawton House has descended to Jane's grand-nephew, Lord Brabourne. The cottage stood on the high-road, and the joyous swarm of Winchester boys went by it on their return home for the holidays. But the garden enjoyed genteel privacy behind its hornbeam hedge, and had grassplots, walks and shrubberies suitable for exercise and composition. There were also rooms for guests. A Miss Lloyd was added to the party, old Steventon connections were near, and the establishment altogether seems to have been happy, cheerful, and propitious to Jane's work. Inspiration revived; the pen was taken up again, and Chawton, like Steventon, produced three novels. These three were "Emma," "Mansfield Park," and "Persuasion." At last she found a publisher for two of those which she had written at Steventon in Mr. Egerton, to whose adventurous spirit — and probably he deemed it a very wild adventure—let the due homage be paid. He gave her for "Sense and Sensibility" one hundred and fifty pounds, which with gay humility she accepted as magnificent payment. The entire sum

which she had received for her works up to the time of her death fell short of seven hundred pounds. "Sense and Sensibility" was published in 1811, when its writer was thirty-six; "Pride and Prejudice" was published two years later. Between 1811 and 1816 Jane Austen wrote "Mansfield Park," "Emma," and "Persuasion. "Mansfield Park" was published in 1814; "Emma" in 1816. "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion" did not appear till 1818, after the writer's death.

The publications were anonymous, and Jane Austen never avowed her authorship. But her secret leaked out. There is a tradition, not accredited by her nephew, that when invited as the writer of "Pride and Prejudice" to meet the writer of "Corinne" she declined, saying that to no house to which she was not asked as Jane Austen would she go as the writer of "Pride and Prejudice." This has been praised as independence, or censured as pride; and if the story is true and the interpretation of it correct, it reminds us of Congreve's request that he might be regarded as a gentleman, not as a playwright, and Voltaire's remark thereupon that he would not have come all that way to see a gentleman. But supposing the story to be true, may not Jane's motive have been simply unwillingness formally to avow authorship? In spite of the popularity of Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, and other female novelists, there was a lingering feeling in those days that a woman in writing a book rather overstepped the limitations of her sex; and Jane, having lived apart from the literary world, and being scrupulous about social sentiment, was likely

to be sensitive on this point. Perhaps the failure to bring the authors of "Corinne" and "Pride and Prejudice" together was not to be deplored, since Madame de Staël pronounced Jane Austen's writings *vulgaires*, by which, if she meant anything more than that their subjects were commonplace, she could not have made a less felicitous remark.

The novels were appreciated by those whose judgment was the best. In Sir Walter Scott's diary is the entry: "Read again, for the third time at least, 'Pride and Prejudice.'" Sir Walter adds, with the graceful self-disparagement of power: "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements of feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!" Macaulay has in his journal the entry: "I have now read once again all Miss Austen's novels; charming they are. There are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection." Such eulogies, however, never met Jane Austen's eye, nor does it appear that she heard what was said by Lord Lansdowne, Sydney Smith, or Sir James Mackintosh, or that much praise from any quarter reached her ear. The *Quarterly* reviewed her in 1815, very poorly and in a doubtful strain. To the multitude fed on high-flown sentiment, or romance like that of the "Mysteries of Udolpho," her tales appeared common-

place and trivial. Her fame may be almost said to be posthumous. Very far from intoxicating was the measure of renown which came to her, though she received a kind note from the Countess of Morley, and what was of much more value, the intelligence that she had pleased Warren Hastings. A lioness she never became, nor, though publication brought her to London, does she seem to have formed literary acquaintances or mixed in the intellectual world. In the autumn of 1815 she was in town, but it was not to attend literary parties, but to nurse her brother Harry through a dangerous fever and slow convalescence at his house in Hans Place.

It was on this occasion, however, that a curious compliment was paid her. Her brother was attended by one of the Prince Regent's physicians who knew her secret. One day he told her that the Prince greatly admired her novels, and kept a set of them in each of his residences, and that, learning that she was in London, his Royal Highness had desired Mr. Clarke, the librarian of Carlton House, to wait on her. Mr. Clarke came, took her to Carlton House, showed her its glories, and told her that if she had any other novel forthcoming she was at liberty to dedicate it to the Prince. "Emma" was dedicated accordingly. But Mr. Clarke, whether by high inspiration or out of his own wisdom, suggested as a subject for a future tale "the habits of life, the character and enthusiasm, of a clergyman who should pass his time between the metropolis and the country." Jane demurely replied that she might be equal to the comic part of the character, but not to the good, the

enthusiastic, the literary. As to the literary part, "she thinks she may boast herself to be with all possible vanity the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress." Mr. Clarke, however, had not done; he had just been made Chaplain and Private Secretary to Prince Leopold, who was going to marry the Princess Charlotte, and in writing to acknowledge the receipt of "Emma," he suggests that "an historical romance illustrative of the august House of Cobourg would just now be very interesting." Jane replies that she could no more write a romance than she could write an epic poem. "I could not sit down," she says, "to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up, and never relax into laughter at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style, and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other." Nothing came of Mr. Clarke's suggestion except a squib entitled, "Plan of a Novel according to Hints from Various Quarters." The figure of poor George IV. has been covered from head to heel with mud flung on it, and, with too good reason, by numberless hands. But let three things be recorded in his favour. He visited Ireland; he fell in love with a very excellent as well as charming woman in the person of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and, if he had been allowed, would have made her his wife; and he liked Jane Austen's novels. It is to be hoped that he did really read them, and that in

saying that he did, his librarian was not telling a courtly fib.

Meantime Jane was performing all the ordinary duties of life. She was affectionately tending her mother's age; she was the kind aunt and counsellor of her nephews and nieces; she was, as we have seen, her brother's nurse in sickness. She wrote sitting in the circle at her little mahogany desk, hiding her work with a piece of blotting-paper if any one came in. Nobody would have guessed from her ways that she was an authoress. The success of her novels she watched with interest of course, but with gay serenity. As has been said before, they were not her life.

After the completion of "Persuasion," a part of it was recast. When this was done, Jane Austen was dying. In 1816 she had begun to feel her strength fail, though it is not known how soon she became aware of the mortal nature of her disease. Her walks were shortened; when they were given up she had to take to a donkey-carriage. Gradually her activity within the house, too, ceased, and she had to lie down. There was only one sofa in the house, a sofa being in those days a luxury rare enough to be the theme of Cowper's great poem. This sofa was occupied by Jane's mother, and Jane never would occupy it even in the old lady's absence, but made herself a couch with chairs, which she pretended was more comfortable to her than the sofa. The real reason was drawn out of her by the questioning of a little niece, who forced her to explain that if she had shown any inclination to use the sofa, her mother might have scrupled to use it. In May,

1817, she was removed to lodgings at Winchester for medical advice. The medical man, Mr. Lyford, spoke hopefully, but hope there was none, and the following letter, written no longer in the strong, clear hand, is nearly the last:

"There is no better way, my dearest E., of thanking you for your affectionate concern for me during my illness than by telling you myself, as soon as possible, that I continue to get better. I will not boast of my handwriting; neither that nor my face have yet recovered their proper beauty, but in other respects I gain strength very fast. I am now out of bed from nine in the morning to ten at night; upon the sofa,[1] it is true, but I eat my meals with Aunt Cassandra in a rational way, and can employ myself, and walk from one room to another. Mr. Lyford says he will cure me, and if he fails, I shall draw up a memorial and lay it before the Dean and Chapter, and have no doubt of redress from that pious, learned, and disinterested body. Our lodgings are very comfortable. We have a neat little drawing-room, with a bow window overlooking Dr. Gabell's garden. Thanks to the kindness of your father and mother in sending me their carriage, my journey hither on Saturday was performed with very little fatigue, and had it been a fine day, I think I should have felt none; but it distressed me to see Uncle Henry and William Knight, who kindly attended us on horseback, riding in the rain almost the whole way. We expect a visit from them to-morrow, and hope they will stay the night; and on Thursday, which is a confirmation and a holiday, we are to get Charles out to breakfast. We have had but one visit from *him*, poor fellow, as he is in sick-room, but he hopes to be out to-night. We see Mrs. Heathcote every day, and William is to call upon us soon. God bless you, my dear E. If ever you are ill, may you be as tenderly nursed as I have been. May the same blessed alleviations of anxious, sympathizing friends be yours; and may you

[1] This was in lodgings at Winchester, not at her home at Chawton.

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possess, as I dare say you will, the greatest blessing of all in the consciousness of not being unworthy of their love. *I* could not feel this.

"Your very affectionate Aunt,

"J. A.

"COLLEGE ST., WINTON, *Tuesday, May 27th.*"

In the last letter are the words, "I will only say further that my dearest sister, my tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse, has not been made ill by her exertions. As to what I owe her, and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion, I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more."

Let her favourite nephew tell the rest:

"Throughout her illness she was nursed by her sister, often assisted by her sister-in-law, my mother. Both were with her when she died. Two of her brothers, who were clergymen, lived near enough to Winchester to be in frequent attendance, and to administer the services suitable for a Christian's death-bed. While she used the language of hope to her correspondents, she was fully aware of her danger, though not appalled by it. It is true that there was much to attach her to life. She was happy in her family; she was just beginning to feel confidence in her own success; and, no doubt, the exercise of her great talents was an enjoyment in itself. We may well believe that she would gladly have lived longer; but she was enabled without dismay or complaint to prepare for death. She was a humble, believing Christian. Her life had been passed in the performance of home duties, and the cultivation of domestic affections, without any self-seeking or craving after applause. She had always sought, as it were by instinct, to promote the happiness of all who came within her influence, and doubtless she had her reward in the peace of mind which was granted her in her last days. Her sweetness of temper never failed. She was ever considerate and grateful to those who attended on her. At times, when she felt rather better, her playfulness of spirit revived, and she amused them even in their sadness. Once, when she thought herself near her

end, she said what she imagined might be her last words to those around her, and particularly thanked her sister-in-law for being with her, saying: 'You have always been a kind sister to me, Mary.' When the end at last came, she sank rapidly, and on being asked by her attendants whether there was anything she wanted, her reply was, '*Nothing but death.*' These were her last words. In quietness and peace she breathed her last on the morning of July 18, 1817."

Only her own family attended the funeral of her of whom they were all "very fond and very proud," more fond it appears even than proud. The "Annual Register" did not notice her death. She was buried under a flat slab of black marble in Winchester Cathedral, near the centre of the north aisle. The verger who showed the cathedral once asked a visitor to tell him "whether there was anything particular about that lady, as so many persons had asked to see where she was buried!" Had he thought of asking the inquirers themselves, he might have learned that much of what was most illustrious in English literature, and not a little of what was most illustrious in English statesmanship, had come to pay its homage at that lowly tomb. The statesmen perhaps felt even more gratitude than the great men of letters to one who has so often smoothed the wrinkles on the brow of care.

As we should expect from such a life, Jane Austen's view of the world is genial, kindly, and, we repeat, free from anything like cynicism. It is that of a clear-sighted and somewhat satirical onlooker, loving what deserves love, and amusing herself with the foibles, the self-deceptions, the affectations of humanity. Refined almost to fastidiousness, she is hard upon vulgarity; not,

however, on good-natured vulgarity, such as that of Mrs. Jennings in "Sense and Sensibility," but on vulgarity like that of Miss Steele, in the same novel, combined at once with effrontery and with meanness of soul.

The Letters, it has been already said, are devoid of interest, biographical or general. Their subjects are the trivial details of a perfectly uneventful life. The people mentioned in them are people of whom no record otherwise remains but the names upon their headstones. The editor's sauce, in fact, is better than the meat. Madame de Sévigné and Horace Walpole threw all their art into their letters. Jane Austen threw not a particle of her art into her letters. She says of herself that she has attained the only art of letter-writing, which is to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth. "I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could through the whole of this letter." The pervading tone of her letters is gay, playful, and occasionally even frisky: you see that the writer is well pleased with life and with herself; that she is affectionate and is happy in the love of those around her. There is a great deal about parties, balls, and social enjoyments of every kind, and the writer's heart is in it all. At the same time she is not uncritical. Sometimes there is a pretty caustic touch. "I would not give much for Mr. Price's chance of living at Deane: he builds his hope, I find, not upon anything that his mother has written, but upon the effect of what he has written himself. He must write a great deal better than those eyes indicate if he can persuade a perverse and narrow-minded woman to oblige those whom she does

not love." "Earle and his wife live in the most private manner imaginable at Portsmouth, without keeping a servant of any kind. What a prodigious innate love of virtue she must have to marry under such circumstances." "She (Miss T.) is not so pretty as I expected; her face has the same defect of baldness as her sister's, and her features not so handsome; she was highly rouged, and looked rather quietly and contentedly silly than anything else." "Mrs. Portman is not much admired in Dorsetshire: the good-natured world, as usual, extolled her beauty so highly that all the neighbourhood have had the pleasure of being disappointed." "As an inducement to subscribe (to a library), Mrs. Martin tells me that her library is not to consist only of novels. She might have spared this pretension to our family, who are great novel-readers and not ashamed of being so; but it was necessary, I suppose, to the self-consequence of half her subscribers." "What an alarming bride Mrs. —— must have been; such a parade is one of the most immodest pieces of modesty that one can imagine. To attract notice could have been her only wish. It augurs ill for her family; it announces not great sense, and therefore ensures boundless influence." It is due, however, to the writer to remember that so far from intending these Letters for any eye but that of the person to whom they were written, she would certainly have been horrified at the idea of their seeing the light; nor does her satire spare herself. When she has to write on a sad subject, such as the death of a sister-in-law, her emotion is evidently strong, but its expression is measured.

To sentimentality Jane Austen was a foe. Antipathy to it runs through her works. She had encountered it in the romances of the day, such as the works of Mrs. Radcliffe and in people who had fed on them. What she would have said if she had encountered it in the form of Rousseauism we can only guess. The solid foundation of her own character was good sense, and her type of excellence as displayed in her heroines is a woman full of feeling, but with her feelings thoroughly under control. Genuine sensibility, however, even when too little under control, she can regard as lovable. Marianne in "Sense and Sensibility" is an object of sympathy, because her emotions, though they are ungoverned and lead her into folly, are genuine, and are matched in intensity by her sisterly affection. But affected sentiment gets no quarter. Sometimes abhorrence of it is even carried further than we like. In "Persuasion," Richard Musgrove may have been a worthless youth for whom none of his family cared or pretended to care till he was gone. Still, a mother's expressions of sorrow for a lost son, albeit somewhat fatuous, can hardly be the proper object of derision; while it would be harsh to say that mourning for those who were objects of little regard when living must be insincere when they are cut off, or that the memory of a boy's faults could not be softened by his early and pathetic death.

Jane Austen had, as she was sure to have, a feeling for the beauties of nature. She paints in glowing language the scenery of Lyme. She speaks almost with rapture of a view which she calls thoroughly English, though

never having been out of England she could hardly judge of its scenery by contrast. She was deeply impressed by the sea, on which, she says, "all must linger and gaze, on their first return to it, who ever deserve to look on it at all." But admiration of the picturesque had "become a mere jargon," from which Jane Austen recoiled. One of her characters is made to say that he likes a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles; that he prefers tall and flourishing trees to those which are crooked and blasted; neat to ruined cottages, snug farmhouses to watch-towers, and a troop of tidy, happy villagers to the finest banditti in the world.

Tradition says that Jane Austen in politics was a mild Tory. Whatever her opinions were they were pretty sure to be mild, and the daughter of a clergyman holding two benefices in the Established Church at the time of the French Revolution, would have shown extraordinary independence of mind if she had been anything but a Tory. That Jane was not a Radical of the school of Godwin is certain, for she says of a man whom she meets that "he was as raffish as she would wish any disciple of Godwin to be." But there is not the slightest tinge of politics in her novels. Considering that her life exactly coincided with the tremendous period of revolution and revolutionary war which commenced with the revolt of the American Colonies and ended with the fall of Napoleon, it is surprising how few and slight are the references to the events of the time either in the Letters or in the Novels. To the French emigrants there are one or two allusions; to the French Revolution none, though under the same roof

with the writer was a connection whose husband had been guillotined. Trafalgar and the Egyptian expedition are mentioned; there is an allusion in the Letters to the retreat on Corunna and the death of Sir John Moore; but there is hardly an expression of interest and none of emotion. Jane says she would read Southey's "Life of Nelson" if there was anything about her brother Frank in it. She says a good deal about cruising and about the capture of prizes. But the cruising is treated as calmly as if it were an ordinary trade, and of the capture of prizes what we learn is that it conveniently supplied fortunes to naval gentlemen who were anxious to marry, and was at the same time productive of topaz rings and gold crosses to young ladies who, like Jane Austen, and Fanny Price in "Mansfield Park," had brothers at sea. With Trafalgar, the danger of French invasion had come to an end, and the society of rural England, almost unanimous in its Toryism, enjoyed a calm of its own in the midst of the European tempest, like the windless centre of a circular storm. No Sir Thomas Bertram seriously apprehended that the torch of Revolution would singe his coachman's wig. If Dr. Grant feared anything, it was that the green goose would fail to appear on table after evening service, not that the Goddess of Reason would be enthroned on his communion table or eject him from his living.

In the navy as a profession, Jane, with two brothers in it, shows a keen interest: she knows it well, and has drawn largely on her knowledge of it both in "Mansfield Park" and in "Persuasion"; she is versed in all its terms and ways; is mistress of its gossip and its slang;

and enters into the grievances of which, in those days of patronage and jobbery, it had enough. Here she is a little Radical. "The Admiralty," she makes Captain Wentworth in "Persuasion" say, "entertain themselves in sending a few hundred men to sea in a ship not fit to be employed; but they have a great many to provide for; and among the thousands that may just as well go to the bottom as not it is impossible for them to distinguish the very set who may be the least missed." Nothing in those unimpassioned pages is warmer than the eulogy on the sailor's character and the defence of him against his detractors in "Persuasion." But Jane's partiality does not seem to have extended to the Marines, if we may judge from her delineation of Lieutenant Price and his household in "Mansfield Park." When she was living at Southampton she would no doubt visit Portsmouth, and there see the sailor's life ashore.

In her general tendencies Jane was evidently conservative. Whenever she compares the old style with the new, you can see that her leaning is in favour of the old. She jealously objects to innovations in the use of words. She likes the old-fashioned system of female education typified by the school of Mrs. Goddard in "Emma."

"Mrs. Goddard was the mistress of a school—not of a seminary, or an establishment, or anything which professed, in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal acquirements with elegant morality, upon new principles and new systems—and where young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity—but a real, honest, old-fashioned boarding-school, where a

reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way, and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies. Mrs. Goddard's school was in high repute, and very deservedly; for Highbury was reckoned a particularly healthy spot: she had an ample house and garden, gave the children plenty of wholesome food, let them run about a great deal in the summer, and in winter dressed their chilblains with her own hands. It was no wonder that a train of twenty young couple now walked after her to church."

Such a school, perhaps, was that at Reading to which Jane had been sent with her elder sister, because the two could not be parted, though she was herself too young to go to school.

On the other hand, there is in "Emma" a flash of something like Radical sympathy with the oppressed governess. The advertising offices for governesses are branded as "offices for the sale, not quite of human flesh, but of human intellect." The trade is said to be comparable to the slave trade, if not in regard to the misery of the victims, in regard to the misery of those who carry it on! Perhaps the character of Miss Taylor in the same tale may be interpreted partly as a plea for a higher appreciation and better treatment of her class. No other glimmering of the "Revolt of Woman" appears in Jane Austen's works. The gospel of Mary Godwin had no more found its way than that of her father to Steventon Rectory or Chawton Cottage.

Jane Austen held the mirror up to her time, or at least to a certain class of the people of her time; and her time was two generations and more before ours.

We are reminded of this as we read her works by a number of little touches of manners and customs belonging to the early part of the century, and anterior to the rush of discovery and development which the century has brought with it. There are no railroads, and no lucifer matches. It takes you two days and a half, even when you are flying on the wings of love or remorse, to get from Somersetshire to London. A young lady who has snuffed her candle out has to go to bed in the dark. The watchman calls the hours of the night. Magnates go about in chariots and four with outriders, their coachmen wearing wigs. People dine at five, and instead of spending the evening in brilliant conversation as we do, they spend it in an unintellectual rubber of whist, or a round game. Life is unelectric, untelegraphic; it is spent more quietly and it is spent at home. If you are capable of enjoying tranquillity, at least by way of occasional contrast to the stir and stress of the present age, you will find in these tales the tranquillity of a rural neighbourhood and a little country town in England a century ago.

Chronologically, a novelist of Jane Austen's time stands half-way between the generation of Fielding and ours. But, besides being a woman, and one of a very different character from our early female novelists, such as Mrs. Aphra Behn or Mrs. Manley, and a clergyman's daughter, Jane, with her contemporaries, wrote under the influence of the moral and religious reaction produced in English society partly by the efforts of religious reformers, such as Wesley and the early Evangelicals, partly by the changed character of the Court, partly and

principally by the tremendous alarm-bell of the French Revolution. In her day "Tristram Shandy" could not have been tolerated, much less would its writer have had any chance of a bishopric. The great novelist of the period, though a thorough man-of-the-world, is as pure as the burn that runs from a Scotch mountain side. In Jane Austen's writings there is now and then a faint trace of the coarseness of the preceding age. She puts a round oath into the mouths of Jack Thorpe and Lieutenant Price. Both are meant to be coarse and repulsive; but in our time the counterpart of Jane Austen would scarcely pen an oath. We are reminded, too, that duelling had not gone out of fashion. "Elinor sighed over the fancied necessity of this (duel), but to a man and a soldier she presumed not to censure it." This was written in a rectory.

That Jane Austen held up the mirror to her time must be remembered when she is charged with want of delicacy in dealing with the relations between the sexes, and especially in speaking of the views of women with regard to matrimony. Women in those days evidently did consider a happy marriage as the best thing that destiny could have in store for them. They desired it for themselves and they sought it for their daughters. Other views had not opened out to them; they had not thought of professions or public life, nor had it entered into the mind of any of them that maternity was not the highest duty and the crown of womanhood. Apparently they also confessed their aims to themselves and to each other with a frankness which would be deemed indelicate in our time. The more worldly and ambitious

of them sought in marriage rank and money, and avowed that they did, whereas they would not avow it at the present day. Gossip and speculation on these subjects were common and more unrefined than they are now, and they naturally formed a large part of the amusement of the opulent and idle class from which Jane Austen's characters were drawn. She only preserves dramatic truth. Often, too, she is ironical; the love of irony is a feature of her mind, and for this also allowance must be made. She does not approve or reward match-making or husband-hunting. Mrs. Jennings, the great matchmaker in "Sense and Sensibility," is also a paragon of vulgarity. Mrs. Norris's matchmaking in "Mansfield Park" leads to the most calamitous results. Charlotte Lucas in "Pride and Prejudice," who unblushingly avows that her object is a husband with a good income, gets what she sought, but you are made to see that she has bought it dear.

So with regard to the question of money. Jane is thoroughly practical. She admits that a sufficiency of money is essential to happiness, but she rebukes the craving for anything more than a sufficiency. She distinctly protests against mercenary marriage, and brings it to shame both in the case of Willoughby in "Sense and Sensibility" and in that of William Elliot in "Persuasion." She protests, in the former of these tales, against separating two young people who were attached to each other on the mere ground of money, and, in the latter, she makes misery result from the breaking off of an engagement on the same grounds. She says that a man would like to give a woman a more comfortable

home than that from which he takes her, and she implies that the woman would like to have the more comfortable home given her; but in this she commits no treason against love. Still she is practical, and so apparently was Shakespeare. After all, the heroines of romantic and sentimental novels seldom end in poverty: often they marry young gentlemen of large fortune. Of Jane's six heroines, three are made happy by clergymen of moderate incomes; one marries an officer in the navy, with no fortune but his pay and his prize-money; one marries a man of moderate estate, who holds his place in her heart against more brilliant expectations; and the sixth, though only an old man's life stands between her and poverty, refuses the owner of a splendid mansion and a great estate, with high family and social rank into the bargain. This would hardly, even in our own days of disinterested affection, be called an inordinate sacrifice of female hearts to Mammon. Not in one instance is it suggested that a heroine is moved by anything but love. "The enthusiasm of a woman's love," it is said of Fanny in "Mansfield Park," "is even beyond the biographer's. To her the handwriting of the man she loves itself, independent of anything it may convey, is a blessedness."

The good Sir Robert Harry Inglis, while he intensely admired Miss Austen, could never speak of her without lamenting the absence of any reference to religion, which he would perhaps have liked her to introduce after the fashion of Mrs. Barbauld or Hannah More. The absence of reference to religion is not total. In "Mansfield Park" the ruin of two young ladies is

ascribed to the neglect of those who brought them up to make their religion practical as well as theoretical. In another tale, it is alleged as an objection to a lover that he is in the habit of travelling on Sundays. However, in those days genteel people, except in very special circles, such as those around Bishop Porteus or Simeon, whatever their sentiments might be, did not talk about religion. This was due, no doubt, largely to indifference; but in some degree it also proceeded from reverence. There can be no doubt about the profoundly religious character of Johnson, yet he did not talk much about religion, nor is there much about it in his works. Jane Austen's end we know was religious, and there is not the slightest reason for doubting that her life was, or that her allegiance to duty had religion for its basis. In this as in everything else, she was sure to be moderate and unenthusiastic. Her model of a preacher, she lets us see, was the moderate and very far from enthusiastic Blair. This may be thought hardly creditable either to her spiritual or her literary taste. Blair, once so famous, has now become an object of ridicule. His rhetorical flourishes, it is true, are sometimes insufferable. But those who have patience to read him will find that there were grounds for his popularity. His ethics are sound; his view of life and duty is sensible; and he sets forth an ideal of religious character attainable by people of the world. Johnson spoke of him with respect, though he was a Scotchman and a Presbyterian.

The standard of clerical duty in those days was low

compared with what it is now. The Established Church, though its slumber had been a little disturbed by Methodism, had not been thoroughly aroused by the formidable advance of Political Dissent and Rationalism hand in hand with Democracy. It was still thought enough if a clergyman went decently through the services on Sunday, christened, married and buried, and perhaps gave a little help and advice to the poor. Non-residence and pluralism were common and were licensed by opinion. Livings were treated like any other kinds of property, were bought and sold without misgiving or disguise, and were the usual provision for a younger son. In this as in other respects, Jane Austen's novels faithfully reflect the little world in which she lived. She shows herself rather in advance of her age by making the patron of a living insist on residence when he gives it to the younger son, instead of allowing the son to continue living at the paternal mansion and ride over to his parish once a week to do duty. Pluralism she could not have denounced without condemning her own father, who held two livings, though they were close together. On the social importance of the clerical office she dwells emphatically in the form of a reply to a worldly and ambitious woman who does not like to marry a clergyman, and she magnifies the gift of preaching. If she has gibbeted clerical sycophancy in the person of Mr. Collins, this does not show that she despised the clergy, but that she wished to laugh the clergy out of a sycophancy which disgraced the profession. Even Mr. Collins, though absurd, is not represented as otherwise than sincere, and it is by

painting religious hypocrites that novelists have given the most deadly blows to religion.

Sir Robert Inglis would not have denied that Jane Austen's morality is pure, or that her moral judgment and her estimate of character are sound. She is far indeed from any idea of making sentimental capital, as Bulwer does, by tampering with the moral law. If she often playfully exposes insincerity and self-deception, if she sometimes, especially in the freshness of her youth, says things which verge on cynicism, she is never really cynical, nor does she ever shake our faith in virtue. When she speaks of duty, different as her strain may be from that of Wordsworth, the ring is as true as that of his Ode.

On the other hand, to the class now much in vogue of novels with a purpose or propagandist novels, those of Jane Austen emphatically do not belong. Her object as a writer of fiction is not to form your opinions, theological, political, or social, nor is it to reform your character, but to impart to you the pleasure which she felt herself. In a passage in "Northanger Abbey" she comes for once before the curtain to defend the readers and writers of novels against the cant of their detractors. A perfect novel is there described as "a work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." Nothing is said about instruction, or about correction of manners. It has been said in praise of a great novelist of a later day, that when

you read her you are in a confessional. Being in a confessional may be very salutary, but it is not pure delight. Jane Austen, by her creative genius, has produced so many charming groups of figures among whom the serious and comic parts of character are distributed. At her word they move from scene to scene through the little drama of their lives, developing their characters as they go. You look on, enjoy the show and forget your cares. Perhaps at the same time you insensibly improve your knowledge of humanity and of yourself, enlarge your sympathies, and, it may be, take in some lesson of unselfishness, courtesy, respect for the feelings of others. No higher mission had Jane Austen; no higher mission did she pretend to have: if you want a theologian, a political philosopher, a regenerator of society, or a moral disciplinarian in your novelist, you must look elsewhere.

The country life of England which Jane Austen painted, though at this moment it seems to be on the verge of critical change, has hitherto remained in its leading features what it was in her time. Sir Thomas Bertram, General Tilney, or Mr. Darcy, the great landowner and local magnate, still dwells in his lordly Mansfield, Northanger, or Pemberley Manor, with its park six miles round, with his train of dependents, and in his pristine dignity, though shorn by modern sentiment of some of the outward trappings of his state, such as the carriage and four with outriders which used to dazzle the eyes of all gazers in the market town. Below the great landowner there are still the small landowners and lesser gentry, such as Mr. Bennet and Mr.

Woodhouse, living often, as Mr. Woodhouse did, on the outskirts of the town or village. There are the parish clergy, many of them connected with the gentry by family ties, as family livings have not ceased to exist, and all of them belonging to the gentry as an Order. Below these again are still in the country the tenant farmer and the labourer, and in the town the professional man or retired tradesman, ranking as a sort of half gentleman, and the shopkeepers. The squire's reign, however, though ancient, is no longer solitary, for commercial wealth has planted its sumptuous villa within sight of his hall; sometimes it has supplanted him in the hall itself. The richer landowners have often bought out the poorer, and in the present day, especially since the reduction of rents by agricultural depression, Mr. Bennet could hardly afford to keep Longbourn. Democratic ideas have begun to find their way into rural society, to disturb the security of its system, and to diminish the respect of the lower grades of it for the upper. The money power has toned down the pride of family and the horror of commercial origin or connections which are always displayed by the characters in Jane Austen's novels. Birmingham is no longer spoken of in genteel circles as a place from which no good can come; nor would a county magnate now think it a blot on his escutcheon, as county magnates did three-quarters of a century ago, to have intermarried with a cotton-spinner like Robert Peel. The clergymen have become, both spiritually and socially, far more active and worthier of their calling; they have ceased to hunt and shoot, and none of them would now avow,

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as a clergyman does in "Persuasion," that he thought himself very lucky in being presented to a benefice where the neighbouring proprietors preserved strictly, and there would be good sport. The Neo-Catholic movement has spread over the parishes, or at least over the rectories; the churches have been restored and the parsons have become ritualistic. The clergyman is now always resident, and there could be no question whether Edmund Bertram should go to live among his parishioners or continue to live at Mansfield Park. On the other hand, railroads and the general movement of the age have made the squire restless: he spends less of his time at home, more in London or on the Continent. In Jane Austen's day only the grandees went to town for the season. Mr. Knightley spent the year in his own place. Sir Thomas Bertram, since he had ceased to be a member of Parliament, passed his days quietly in his mansion, and his family did the same; only the eldest son, as a sporting man, making trips to Newmarket. In these days the family would be going to the Continent every year. If Mr. Allen goes to Bath, it is for his gout, and though a wish for gay society drew many to the great watering-place, it seems to have been under pretence of taking the waters. The squire's intellectual horizon has been enlarged with that of the rest of the world by journalism and telegraphs. Perhaps since the reform of the Universities he is somewhat better educated, though he is still not a reading man. Perhaps his wife and daughters have also shared the march of intellect, and are somewhat less devoted to fancy needlework and gossip. His manners and

language have no doubt improved. The march of refined luxury beginning in the city has extended to the hall, and the craving for all that is exciting and stimulating has altered the character of the old sports, turning the hunt into a steeplechase and the shooting-party into a *battue*. But the life which Jane Austen painted retains its leading features, and is recognized by the reader at the present day with little effort of the imagination. It is a life of opulent quiet and rather dull enjoyment, physically and morally healthy compared with that of a French aristocracy, though without much of the salt of duty; a life uneventful, exempt from arduous struggles and devoid of heroism, a life presenting no materials for tragedy and hardly an element of pathos, a life of which matrimony is the chief incident, and the most interesting objects are the hereditary estate and the heir.

Such a life could evidently furnish no material for romance. It could furnish materials only for that class of novel which corresponds to sentimental comedy. To that class all Jane Austen's novels belong. She said with perfect truth that she could not for her life have written a romance. Perhaps Scott was right in thinking that he could not have written "Mansfield Park," though he could write "St. Ronan's Well:" but Jane Austen assuredly could not have written "The Heart of Midlothian" or "The Bride of Lammermoor:" all that she could do with romance was to satirize it as the "Mysteries of Udolpho" is satirized in "Northanger Abbey." If anything approaching to the tragic occurs, such as the seduction of Maria Bertram in "Mansfield

Park," or the seduction of the girl under General Brandon's protection by Willoughby and the consequent duel in "Sense and Sensibility," it takes place in the background, and is recounted without being described. The nearest approach to passion is the ungoverned sensibility of Maria Dashwood. The most thrilling adventures are little more than scrapes, though they are scrapes in which the skill of the artist makes us feel almost as much interest as we feel in the adventures of the romantic school.

The scene in "Northanger Abbey," and in "Persuasion" is laid partly in Bath, with which, as we have seen, Jane Austen was well acquainted. But her characters, as has been said, are still the same, though they are transported to the watering-place. Nor does she go beyond a narrow zone of class. Her personages are all taken from the circle of the gentry and their connections. If people of any other grade are introduced, they never play an important part in the drama; generally they are mutes. It may seem strange that a passionate admirer of Crabbe, the poet of the lower middle class and of the poor, should not have resorted to the mine in which he had discovered treasures of pathos and humour. With the middle class, upper or lower, Jane Austen came little into contact, but she did come into contact with the labouring poor of the country parish, and we see that she went among them like a good clergyman's daughter, made friends of them and relieved their wants. She could not, however, have the same opportunities of studying their life and characters thoroughly as she had

of studying thoroughly the life and characters of those with whom her life was passed. Furthermore the squalor of extreme poverty would be likely to repel her, for she was evidently very refined in her tastes, and she is probably giving expression to her own sentiment when she makes Fanny Price recoil from the coarseness and untidiness of her father's house, and contrast them with the gentility of Mansfield Park. The interesting part of poverty, again, and its capacity of affording materials for art, poetry, or fiction, lie too much in the struggles and sufferings of the poor: these are tragic, and tragedy was not the line of Jane Austen. It may be just to her to quote a passage in "Emma" on this subject, which evidently reflects the writer's own ideas and habits:

"They were now approaching the cottage, and all idle topics were superseded. Emma was very compassionate; and the distresses of the poor were as sure of relief from her personal attention and kindness, her counsel and her patience, as from her purse. She understood their ways, could allow for their ignorance and their temptations, had no romantic expectations of extraordinary virtue from those for whom education had done so little, entered into their troubles with ready sympathy, and always gave her assistance with as much intelligence as good-will. In the present instance, it was sickness and poverty together which she came to visit; and after remaining there as long as she could give comfort or advice, she quitted the cottage with such an impression of the scene as made her say to Harriet, as they walked away,—

"'These are the sights, Harriet, to do one good. How trifling they make everything else appear! I feel now as if I could think of nothing but these poor creatures all the rest of the day; and yet who can say how soon it may all vanish from my mind?'

"'Very true,' said Harriet. 'Poor creatures! one can think of nothing else.'

"'And really, I do not think the impression will soon be over,'

said Emma, as she crossed the low hedge and tottering footstep which ended the narrow, slippery path through the cottage garden, and brought them into the lane again. 'I do not think it will,' stopping to look once more at all the outward wretchedness of the place, and recall the still greater within.

"'Oh dear, no,' said her companion.

"They walked on. The lane made a slight bend; and when that bend was passed, Mr. Elton was immediately in sight, and so near as to give Emma time only to say farther,—

"'Ah, Harriet, here comes a very sudden trial of our stability in good thoughts. Well (smiling), I hope it may be allowed that if compassion has produced exertion and relief to the sufferers, it has done all that is truly important. If we feel for the wretched enough to do all we can for them, the rest is empty sympathy, only distressing to ourselves.'"

There seems to be some point in the last sentence, and we might suppose that it was directed against literary affectation of sympathy with poverty if we did not know that the writer adored Crabbe.

Of the worship of rank, or of social sycophancy of any kind, there is not a trace in Jane Austen. In "Northanger Abbey," and in "Persuasion," indeed everywhere, she shows a hearty contempt for such propensities. The nobility hardly come within the range of her observation, and she has very little to say about them; but she ridicules aristocratic pride in Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and treats with little respect the august Lady Dalrymple and her daughter. We learn from one of her letters that she declined to stand up at a ball with the heir of Lord Bolton because he danced badly.

Metaphor has been exhausted in depicting the perfection of Jane Austen's art, combined with the

narrowness of her field. The analogy of Dutch painting is not happy, since it suggests not only minuteness of detail, but a class of subjects some of them hardly fit for art, and certainly most uncongenial to Jane Austen. Photography is mechanical. Much happier is her own comparison of her work to that of a miniature painter. "What should I do," she says to another writer, "with your strong, vigorous sketches, full of variety and glow? How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour?" Her own fancy needle-work might furnish another simile. Her love of the vivid elaboration of detail is almost unique. In "Emma" a party is made to pick strawberries in Mr. Knightley's garden. An ordinary writer would probably be content with saying that the party picked strawberries till they were tired. But this is Jane Austen's treatment:

"The whole party were assembled, excepting Frank Churchill, who was expected every moment from Richmond; and Mrs. Elton, in all her apparatus of happiness, her large bonnet and her basket, was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking. Strawberries, and only strawberries, could now be thought or spoken of. 'The best fruit in England—everybody's favourite—always wholesome. These the finest beds and finest sorts. Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them. Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten

much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing—only objection to gathering strawberries the stooping—glaring sun—tired to death—could bear it no longer—must go and sit in the shade.'"

Here is one more instance out of a hundred of the same faculty:

"When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room after dinner, this poverty was particularly evident, for the gentleman *had* supplied the discourse with some variety—the variety of politics, enclosing land, and breaking horses—but then it was all over, and one subject only engaged the ladies till coffee came in, which was the comparative heights of Harry Dashwood and Lady Middleton's second son, William, who were nearly of the same age.

"Had both the children been there, the affair might have been determined too easily by measuring them at once; but as Harry only was present, it was all conjectural assertions on both sides, and everybody had a right to be equally positive in their opinion, and to repeat it over and over again as often as they liked.

"The parties stood thus:

"The two mothers, though each really convinced that her own son was the tallest, politely decided in favour of the other.

"The two grandmothers, with not less partiality, but more sincerity, were equally earnest in support of their own descendant.

"Lucy, who was hardly less anxious to please one parent than the other, thought the boys were both remarkably tall for their age, and could not conceive that there could be the smallest difference in the world between them; and Miss Steele, with yet greater address, gave it, as fast as she could, in favour of each.

"Elinor, having once delivered her opinion on William's side, by which she offended Mrs. Ferrars, and Fanny still more, did not see the necessity of enforcing it by any farther assertion; and Marianne, when called on for hers, offended them all by declaring that she had no opinion to give, as she had never thought about it."

Nor are we ever led to feel that the writer is going out of her way to make a description. The elaboration,

though wonderful, seems as natural as that of a fine miniature. The scene just given is not excrescence, since it develops the character of those who take part in it.

This, meagre as it is, is pretty much the sum of what we know about the woman. The artist can only be presented by giving an account of her works. In doing this our object will be not only to introduce and commend them to those, many we fear in number especially among people under fifty, who have not yet read them, but to help as far as we can in the appreciation, or at all events the study of their construction, of the fine touches of art with which they abound, and of the varieties of social character which they portray. We would endeavour, in other words, to furnish not only an introduction, but a guide to the treasure-house of Jane Austen's writings. It may be safely said that not only the guide but the introduction is needed by a great mass even of pretty-well-read people on both sides, and especially on the American side, of the Atlantic. A flood of modern fiction pours in, and sensationalism prevails. Jane Austen's tales are known to relate to a by-gone time; they are known to be quiet and devoid of thrilling incident; they are spoken of respectfully as classics, and as classics allowed to rest upon the shelf.

CHAPTER II.

"PRIDE and Prejudice" has been generally thought the best of the series. Philip Darcy is Pride; Elizabeth Bennet is Prejudice; and the plot is the struggle of their mutual attraction against their mutual repulsion, ending in love and marriage. Elizabeth has been playfully pronounced a charming being by her creatress, who perhaps made her partly in her own image. She is not supremely beautiful, but has force and charm of character, excellent sense, and a lively wit. She is the second of the five daughters of Mr. Bennet, the owner of Longbourn, with an estate of two thousand a year, and thus ranking among the gentry of the second degree. Her father is "a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice." Her mother is an almost incredibly silly and vulgar woman, whose pretty face lured Mr. Bennet into an intellectual misalliance, the consequences of which cause him to shut himself up a good deal in his library and take little thought of his family, while he makes them the butts of his caustic wit. Jane, the eldest daughter, is a great beauty, faultless in character and amiable to the verge of insipidity. Mary is a bookworm and a moralizing

pedant. Lizzy and Kitty are like their mother, silly, vulgar, giggling girls, always running after the officers of the regiment quartered at Meryton, the little neighbouring town. As Mr. Bennet's estate—he having no son—is entailed on a cousin, Mrs. Bennet may be excused for anxiety to see her daughters well married, though not for the way she sets about it or the flagrancy of her match-making. The connections of the family are commercial and ungenteel. Mr. Philip Darcy is a young man of the highest family, with a great estate. His mind and character are intrinsically excellent, but their excellence is masked by pride. An only son, he has, by his own confession, "been spoiled by his parents, taught what was right but not taught to conceal his temper, given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit, allowed, encouraged, almost taught to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond his own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with his own."

The drama opens with the arrival in the Bennets' neighbourhood of a friend of Darcy, Mr. Bingley, who takes Netherfield, a large house, with some intention of settling. As Mr. Bingley is rich and unmarried, Mrs. Bennet's hopes are at once excited, and Mr. Bennet is teased into calling on the new-comer. Darcy is on a visit to Bingley, and is thus brought into contact with Elizabeth Bennet and her family. At a Meryton ball, where they first meet, Darcy displays his pride and forfeits popularity by stalking about the room without dancing, and treating everybody as beneath his notice.

Elizabeth overhears him speaking of her disparagingly, and declining to be introduced to her. Afterwards, seeing more of her, he is visibly attracted to her, and feels the charm of her character. His ice begins to thaw under her playful rallying. He hovers about her, and passages occur between them which are evidently preludes to love. But he is repelled by the insufferable vulgarity of the inferior members of her family, especially her mother, as well as by her mercantile connections. Mr. Bingley has with him his two fashionable and dashing but low-minded sisters, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Miss Bingley, who is herself angling outrageously for Darcy, does her best to set him against Elizabeth. Bingley himself meanwhile has fallen deeply in love with the lovely and amiable Jane. Elizabeth dreams of nothing less than of the conquest she is making of Darcy. At this juncture a comical suitor appears for her hand in the person of the Rev. Mr. Collins, heir-presumptive to Longbourn, who proposes by marrying one of his fair cousins to make them amends for cutting them out of the property, and at the same time to fulfil the behest of his patroness, the Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whose pleasure it is that he should marry. He proposes in solemn form and is rejected, to the great disgust of Mrs. Bennet, who little dreams for what high destiny her daughter is reserved, and thinks of Mr. Darcy only as a haughty, disagreeable man. The love affairs are advanced by a visit of some days paid by the two sisters to Netherfield, where Jane, thanks to her mother's scheming, is laid up with a bad cold and Elizabeth goes to attend her. Darcy shows his interest in Elizabeth by defending her against

the malice of Bingley's sisters and the jealousy of one of them, while Bingley is manifestly on the point of proposing to Jane. But all is apparently ruined by a ball at Netherfield at which the objectionable portion of the Bennet family displays its character in a fatal manner. Mrs. Bennet talks of her expectations for her daughter Jane within earshot of Darcy, and Mary exhibits her accomplishments with disastrous effect by singing two songs after supper. Darcy casts Elizabeth out of his heart, persuades Bingley to give up Jane, Bingley's two sisters of course lending their sinister aid, and the whole party takes flight from Netherfield to town. Jane is left forlorn, and Elizabeth, divining what has happened and who are the authors of it, deeply resents the injury done to her sister. Her prejudice against Darcy has been strengthened by her intercourse, which at one time seems approaching a dangerous point, with Wickham, an officer of the militia regiment quartered at Meryton, and a very fascinating young man. Wickham is the son of a trusted steward of Darcy's father, and had been bequeathed by the old gentleman to his heir's liberality and care. He has a dark tale of wrong to tell against Darcy, whom he paints with artful touches as not only the haughtiest and coldest, but the most selfish and unfeeling of men. Elizabeth is ready to believe anything bad of Darcy, and her reliance on the truth of Wickham's tale is not shaken by seeing that it is Wickham who avoids meeting Darcy, not Darcy who avoids meeting Wickham. Thus a double wall of adamant seems to have been raised between Elizabeth and Darcy.

But destiny is not to be baffled, and the barrier opens

again. Mr. Collins, rejected by Elizabeth, has been accepted by her practical friend, Miss Charlotte Lucas. Elizabeth goes to stay with them at the parsonage, close to Rosings, the seat of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, patroness of the living and aunt of Darcy. Lady Catherine is an insolent aristocrat, tyrannizing over everybody about her, meddling with everybody's business, and slavishly adored by Mr. Collins. She has a sickly, pampered daughter, whom she destines to marry Darcy, so as to unite the Rosings and Pemberley estates. At the same time, of course, Darcy comes to visit his aunt, and as the party at the parsonage is often honoured with a command to make up her ladyship's dinner-party at Rosings, intercourse with Elizabeth is renewed. With the renewal of his intercourse with Elizabeth, Darcy's love revives, and perhaps its revival is assisted by the admiration evidently felt for her by his friend, Colonel Fitzwilliam, who has come with him to Rosings. Once more he hovers about her with a mixture in his manner of interest and constraint, which denotes an internal struggle. He surprises her and the rest of the party by calling familiarly at the parsonage, he haunts her favourite walk: the mistress of the parsonage begins to suspect the truth, but to Elizabeth it appears impossible. One evening, knowing Elizabeth to be alone, he suddenly, and to her great astonishment, presents himself at the parsonage. Unluckily for him, she has extracted from his friend, Colonel Fitzwilliam, complete confirmation of her suspicion that he it was who had persuaded Bingley to give up Jane, and she had been brooding over Jane's melancholy letters when he entered. She had, in fact,

been prevented from going with the Collinses to dine at Rosings by a headache which her agitation had caused. There follows this scene, in which Pride encounters Prejudice with a violence which seems finally to wreck their predestined happiness :

"In a hurried manner he immediately began an inquiry after her health, imputing his visit to a wish of hearing that she were better. She answered him with cold civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up, walked about the room. Elizabeth was surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began :

"'In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.'

"Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She started, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement, and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well ; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.

"In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive ; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done. He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer ; and with expressing his hope, that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this, she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer.

He spoke of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security. Such a circumstance could only exasperate farther, and, when he ceased, the colour rose in her cheeks, and she said—

"'In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could feel gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to any one. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration. The feelings which, you tell me, have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard, can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation.'

"Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantelpiece with his eyes fixed on her face, seemed to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise. His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips till he believed himself to have attained it. The pause was to Elizabeth's feelings dreadful. At length, in a voice of forced calmness, he said—

"'And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little *endeavour* at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance.'

"'I might as well inquire,' replied she, 'why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I *was* uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Had not my own feelings decided against you—had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a beloved sister?'

"As she pronounced these words, Mr. Darcy changed colour;

but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued—

"'I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted *there*. You dare not, you cannot deny that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other,—of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind.'

"She paused, and saw with no slight indignation that he was listening with an air which proved him wholly unmoved by any feeling of remorse. He even looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity.

"'Can you deny that you have done it?' she repeated.

"With assumed tranquillity he then replied, 'I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself.'

"Elizabeth disdained the appearance of noticing this civil reflection, but its meaning did not escape, nor was it likely to conciliate her.

"'But it is not merely this affair,' she continued, 'on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham. On this subject, what can you have to say? In what imaginary act of friendship can you here defend yourself? or under what misrepresentations can you here impose upon others?'

"'You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns,' said Darcy, in a less tranquil tone, and with a heightened colour.

"'Who that knows what his misfortunes have been, can help feeling an interest in him?'

"'His misfortunes!' repeated Darcy, contemptuously; 'yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed.'

"'And of your infliction,' cried Elizabeth, with energy. 'You have reduced him to his present state of poverty—comparative poverty. You have withheld the advantages which you must know to have been designed for him. You have deprived the best years

of his life of that independence which was no less his due than his desert. You have done all this! and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt and ridicule.'

"'And this,' cried Darcy, as he walked with quick steps across the room, 'is your opinion of me! This is the estimation in which you hold me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed! But perhaps,' added he, stopping in his walk, and turning towards her, 'these offences might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed, had I, with greater policy, concealed my struggles, and flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination; by reason, by reflection, by everything. But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence. Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?—to congratulate myself on the hope of relations whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?'

"Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment; yet she tried to the utmost to speak with composure when she said—

"'You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner.'

"She saw him start at this, but he said nothing, and she continued—

"'You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.'

"Again his astonishment was obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. She went on:

"'From the very beginning—from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month

before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.'

"'You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.'

"And with these words he hastily left the room, and Elizabeth heard him the next moment open the front door and quit the house."

Next morning Darcy waylays Elizabeth in her walk, and puts into her hand a long letter, in which, without renewing his addresses, he defends himself against the two charges of cruelly wrecking her sister's happiness, and of having wronged Wickham. As to the first, he admits that he interfered, but he pleads ignorance of any strong attachment on the part of Jane. To the second charge he replies by giving the true version of the story, which shows that he had behaved as well as possible to Wickham, and that Wickham was an ungrateful scoundrel. In justifying his interference between Bingley and Jane, he is led to make some stringent remarks on the objectionable members of the Bennet family, though he compliments Jane and Elizabeth by contrast. The letter, though read at first with aversion and incredulity, tells in the end. Elizabeth feels that she has been rash in believing Wickham. She also feels that though Darcy's mode of proffering his hand, his avowal of the struggle undergone by his pride, and his assurance of being accepted, were offensive, she may be proud of having won and kept the affection of such a man.

All now seems over, but of course is not. Elizabeth is on a tour in Derbyshire with her worthy uncle and

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aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. They find themselves near Pemberley, Darcy's country seat, and as it is a show place, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner go to see it. Elizabeth accompanies them, after duly assuring herself that its master is not at home. It is a noble mansion with a beautiful park and grounds. Elizabeth cannot help reflecting that she might have been mistress of it. They talk to the housekeeper, an old servant, who gives them a glowing account of her master's kindness of heart, the affection felt for him by all about him, and his excellence as a brother, painting him exactly the reverse of that which he had been painted by Wickham. Suddenly, to Elizabeth's confusion, Darcy himself appears, having been brought home by business a day before he was expected, and in advance of the rest of his party, which consists of Bingley and his two sisters. The meeting is awkward at first, but presently it appears that Darcy is a changed man. All his haughtiness and coldness have departed. He is courtesy itself; does with the utmost grace the honours of his beautiful and sumptuous home; begs to be introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and pays them the greatest attention, though they are commercial. He invites them to Pemberley. He takes his sister Georgiana over to call on them and Elizabeth at their inn. Bingley also is most cordial. Mrs. Gardiner sees the direction in which matters are tending. Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley see it too, and renew their malicious efforts, but without success. Miss Bingley at last gets her quietus. She reminds Darcy of his having once said that he should no more think of calling Elizabeth a beauty than of calling her mother a wit, adding, "but afterwards

she seemed to improve on you, and I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time." "Yes," is Darcy's reply, "but that was only when I first knew her, for it is many months since I have considered her one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance." Georgiana Darcy seconds by her amiability the advances of her brother, and her shyness suggests that he also may sometimes have been only shy when he appeared to be proud.

But the sky of love so rapidly brightening is once more overcast. News arrives that the feather-headed Lydia Bennet has run away with Wickham from Brighton, where his regiment has been encamped and she has been staying. An avalanche of affliction and shame has fallen upon the Bennet family, the head of which now sees with anguish how faulty he has been in not looking to the conduct of his wife and daughters. This seems a fatal blow. To Darcy's personal fastidiousness and family pride the Bennet connection will now be more intolerable than ever. The contrary is the result. Darcy's pride has been thoroughly subdued by love, and the disaster which has befallen the family of the object of his attachment only serves to call forth the deeper and nobler part of his character. Without disclosing his intentions he hastens to London, where Wickham and Lydia have concealed themselves, uses his knowledge of Wickham's previous connections and habits to discover their hiding-place, persuades Wickham to make Lydia an honest woman, pays his debts, undertakes to buy him a commission, and, to crown all, bows his pride so far as to be present at the marriage. All this he does, without letting the Bennets know it,

under cover of Mr. Gardiner's name, but the truth is revealed to Elizabeth by Lydia, and produces its natural impression on her mind. Rumours having reached Lady Catherine de Bourgh of an engagement between her nephew and Elizabeth, that dragonness comes thundering to Longbourn, pounces on Elizabeth, draws her to a private interview, and threatens the daring girl with her high displeasure if she presumes to think of the hand of the man destined for Miss de Bourgh. Elizabeth comports herself with firmness and discretion, and Lady Catherine seals the doom of her own ambition by reporting to Darcy that Elizabeth had refused to renounce him. After this all goes smoothly. First Bingley proposes to Jane. Then Darcy proposes to Elizabeth in a strain very different from that in which he made his first offer. The curtain falls amidst the comical transports of Mrs. Bennet over the marriage of three daughters, and Mr. Bennet, after giving his consent in his library to the marriage of Elizabeth with Darcy, only remarks that if there are other young men who want to marry his daughters, he is at leisure and they may come in.

Lord Brabourne says that Darcy is the only one of his great-aunt's heroes for whom he feels much regard. Darcy's character has certainly more than any other in the set the "intricacy" which Jane Austen thought the great source of interest. Underlying his unamiable exterior, he has generous qualities which his love of Elizabeth brings out; and that her first rejection of him, instead of estranging, cures him of his pride is a proof of the real depth and nobleness of his character.

His pride and self-love, however, in the early scenes are somewhat overdone. No well-bred man would behave as he does in the Meryton ball-room. Nobody but a puppy would reply when he was asked to let himself be introduced to a young lady, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men." No man of sense would say of himself, especially to a woman with whom he had only just become acquainted, "I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of the understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding—certainly too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others as soon as I ought, nor their offences against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost is lost for ever." Such might be the thoughts of a man brought up in isolation by an idolizing household and with exaggerated ideas of his personal and family consequence, and they might reveal themselves in his conduct, but they would not escape his lips.

Of the minor characters by far the most amusing is Mr. Collins, with his solemn priggishness and his worship of his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Most exquisite is the scene in which he makes Elizabeth an offer of his hand.

"Mrs. Bennet and Kitty walked off, and as soon as they were gone Mr. Collins began.

"'Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that your modesty, so far from doing you any disservice, rather adds to your other perfections. You would have been less amiable in my eyes had there not been this little unwillingness; but allow me to assure you, that I have your respected mother's permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house, I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying—and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did.'

"The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing, that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him farther, and he continued :—

"'My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish; secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier—that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject; and it was but the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford—between our pools at quadrille, while Mrs. Jenkinson was arranging Miss de Bourgh's footstool, that she said, "Mr. Collins, you must marry. A clergyman like you must marry. Choose properly, choose a gentlewoman for my sake; and for your own, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way. This is my advice. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her." Allow me, by the way, to observe, my fair cousin, that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer. You will find her manners beyond anything I can describe; and your wit and vivacity, I think, must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and

respect which her rank will inevitably excite. Thus much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and I shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the Four Per Cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.'

"It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now.

"'You are too hasty, sir,' she cried. 'You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without further loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them.'

"'I am not now to learn,' replied Mr. Collins, with a formal wave of the hand, 'that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long.'

"'Upon my word, sir,' cried Elizabeth, 'your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked

a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so. Nay, were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill-qualified for the situation.'

"'Were it certain that Lady Catherine would think so,' said Mr. Collins very gravely—'but I cannot imagine that her ladyship would at all disapprove of you. And you may be certain that when I have the honour of seeing her again, I shall speak in the highest terms of your modesty, economy, and other amiable qualifications.'

"'Indeed, Mr. Collins, all praise of me will be unnecessary. You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise. In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self-reproach. This matter may be considered, therefore, as finally settled.' And rising as she thus spoke, she would have quitted the room, had not Mr. Collins thus addressed her:

"'When I do myself the honour of speaking to you next on this subject, I shall hope to receive a more favourable answer than you have now given me; though I am far from accusing you of cruelty at present, because I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character.'

"'Really, Mr. Collins,' cried Elizabeth, with some warmth, 'you puzzle me exceedingly. If what I have hitherto said can appear to you in the form of encouragement, I know not how to express my refusal in such a way as may convince you of its being one.'

"'You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses are merely words of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these:—It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation

in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favour; and you should take it into further consideration, that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you. Your portion is unhappily so small, that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall choose to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females.'

"'I do assure you, sir, that I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed to be sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female, intending to plague you, but as a rational creature, speaking the truth from her heart.'

"'You are uniformly charming!' cried he, with an air of awkward gallantry; 'and I am persuaded that when sanctioned by the express authority of both your excellent parents, my proposals will not fail of being acceptable.'"

Charming, too, is Mr. Collins's letter of condolence to Mr. Bennet on the distress and disgrace which had been brought on the Longbourn family by Lydia's elopement with Wickham.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I feel myself called upon, by our relationship, and my situation in life, to condole with you on the grievous affliction you are now suffering under, of which we were yesterday informed by a letter from Hertfordshire. Be assured, my dear sir, that Mrs. Collins and myself sincerely sympathize with you, and all your respectable family, in your present distress, which must be of the bitterest kind, because proceeding from a cause which no time can remove. No arguments shall be wanting on my part

that can alleviate so severe a misfortune—or that may comfort you, under a circumstance that must be of all others most afflicting to a parent's mind. The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. And it is the more to be lamented, because there is reason to suppose, as my dear Charlotte informs me, that this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence; though, at the same time, for the consolation of yourself and Mrs. Bennet, I am inclined to think that her own disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity at so early an age. Howsoever that may be, you are grievously to be pitied; in which opinion I am not only joined by Mrs. Collins, but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the affair. They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family? And this consideration leads me moreover to reflect, with augmented satisfaction, on a certain event of last November; for had it been otherwise, I must have been involved in all your sorrow and disgrace. Let me advise you then, my dear sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence.

"I am, dear Sir, &c., &c."

Mr. Collins has been justly described as the representative, under a somewhat altered form, of the servile domestic chaplain of the seventeenth century. He was a possible character in Jane Austen's day. Perhaps a vestige of him might be found even now.

Mr. Bennet's dry humour is another great source of fun. The scene in which he tantalizes his wife and daughters about calling at Netherfield is a happy opening of the tale. "Lizzy," he says to his daughter, when her opinion has turned out wiser than his own, "I bear you no ill-will for being justified in your advice to me last

May, which, considering the event, shows some greatness of mind." His wife says plaintively that after his death she will be turned out of her house by Mr. Collins as the heir in tail. "My dear," he replies, "do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that *I* may be the survivor." He is excellent in playing off Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins asks whether Miss de Bourgh has been presented.

"'I do not remember her name among the ladies at Court.'

"'Her indifferent state of health unhappily prevents her being in town; and by that means, as I told Lady Catherine myself one day, has deprived the British court of its brightest ornament. Her ladyship seemed pleased with the idea; and you may imagine that I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies. I have more than once observed to Lady Catherine, that her charming daughter seemed born to be a duchess, and that the most elevated rank, instead of giving her consequence, would be adorned by her.—These are the kind of little things that please her ladyship, and it is a sort of attention which I consider myself peculiarly bound to pay.'

"'You judge very properly,' said Mr. Bennet, 'and it is happy for you that you possess the talent of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?'

"'They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible.'

"Mr. Bennet's expectations were fully answered. His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped, and he listened to him with the keenest enjoyment, maintaining at the same time the most resolute composure of countenance, and except in an occasional glance at Elizabeth, requiring no partner in his pleasure."

Nor, the man's character being a compound of sense and

weakness, is there anything unnatural in his having been caught by a pretty face, and married a woman who cannot be a companion to him, and from whose folly and vulgarity he has to take refuge in his books. If she was lively and forward, he, being shy and a recluse, would probably be caught with ease. Certainly Mrs. Bennet is an extreme example of her class, and her silliness does sometimes verge pretty closely on idiocy, as when she flies into an ecstasy of delight over the by-no-means triumphal marriage of Lydia with Wickham, and fancies that they will take one of the great houses in the neighbourhood. She says amusing things, however, in her way. "I do think Mrs. Long is as good a creature as ever lived—and her nieces are very pretty behaved girls, and not at all handsome. I like them prodigiously."

There is no saying exactly what persons of quality may have done in Lady Catherine de Bourgh's day. But in these days her autocracy would be difficult, and her dictatorial insolence would scarcely escape a fall. Her sudden descent with all her terrors to prevent Darcy's marriage is too much for our belief. The basis of the character, however, is natural enough; and the dinner-party at Rosings, with Mr. Collins acting as hierophant, is very good fun. After all, the features of a comic mask must be a little exaggerated for the stage.

A notable though very subordinate character is Charlotte Lucas. She is a good sensible girl, worthy to be Elizabeth's friend. But she is made the vehicle of the most coarsely practical view of matrimony as a provision for a young woman. "I am not romantic," she

says; "I never was. I ask only a comfortable home, and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast in entering the marriage state." Accordingly, when Elizabeth has refused Mr. Collins, Charlotte accepts him without the slightest hesitation. Mr. Collins, to be sure, was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for educated women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest "preservation from want." In Charlotte's philosophy "happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards, to have their share of vexations, and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life." What is the result of Charlotte Lucas's practical application of her own theory? It is such as to indicate that Jane Austen herself was unromantic, but at the same time was very far from taking the same view of marriage as Charlotte Lucas. When Elizabeth visits the Collinses in their home, she finds it fitted up and arranged with a neatness and consistency of which she gives Charlotte all the credit. "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort through-

out, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten." Charlotte has chosen her sitting-room at the back of the house, because if it had a livelier look-out Mr. Collins would be too much there, and she encourages his taste for gardening to relieve herself of his society. No denunciation of mercenary marriage or effusion of romantic sentiment could have taught us more effectively that Charlotte's counsels are not counsels of perfection. Yet under the same conditions, probably, the same measure of imperfect happiness has often been enjoyed. Besides, Charlotte could not choose her children from worldly motives. If she became a mother, her state may have been not only happier but higher as Mrs. Collins than it could have been had she remained unmarried.

CHAPTER III.

"SENSE and Sensibility" is a companion to "Pride and Prejudice," running somewhat in the same line of invention as well as corresponding in title, but inferior. To suppose that the sisters Jane and Cassandra Austen appear as characters in Jane's novels is absurd. But their affection turned Jane's thoughts as a novelist in the direction of sisterly love. We had a pair of sisters in "Pride and Prejudice;" we have another pair in "Sense and Sensibility." Elinor who is Sense, Marianne who is Sensibility, and Margaret who is a cypher, are the daughters of Mrs. Dashwood, the second wife of a gentleman who at his death bequeathed them all to the generosity of his son by his first wife, and the heir of the estate, Mr. John Dashwood. The generosity of Mr. John Dashwood is very limited, while that of his wife, who governs him, is still more so. Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters leave their old home and go to live in Devonshire, where Sir John Middleton, an old friend, has provided them with a cottage close to his own place. Elinor carries with her an attachment, verging apparently on an engagement, to Edward Ferrars, son of the wealthy, ambitious, and

hard-hearted Mrs. Ferrars, and brother of Mrs. John Dashwood, a young man for whom his friends have formed great hopes of distinction, which he has neither the force nor the desire to fulfil. Marianne finds a lover in Willoughby, a young man who reminds us of Wickham in "Pride and Prejudice," both in his power of fascination and in his want of principle. Into Willoughby's arms she rushes with the impulsive indiscretion of a wildly romantic, sentimental, and enthusiastic girl. Her lover is dependent on the favour of a wealthy relative, Mrs. Smith, as Edward Ferrars is on that of his mother. Another man, and a far worthier, at the same time feels the charms of Marianne's beauty and of her warm and affectionate disposition. But Colonel Brandon is thirty-seven, and wears flannel waistcoats. Moreover, he has loved before, and the romantic Marianne cannot conceive the possibility of a second love.

Willoughby is Colonel Brandon's enemy, and tries to prejudice the sisters against him with the same wilfulness with which Wickham laboured to prejudice Elizabeth against Darcy.

"'Miss Dashwood,' cried Willoughby, 'you are now using me unkindly. You are endeavouring to disarm me by reason, and to convince me against my will. But it will not do. You shall find me as stubborn as you can be artful. I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel Brandon: he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine; he has found fault with the hanging of my curricle; and I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare. If it will be any satisfaction to you, however, to be told, that I believe his character to be in other respects irreproachable, I am ready to confess it. And in return for an acknowledg-

ment which must give me some pain, you cannot deny me the privilege of disliking him as much as ever.'"

The scene is partly at the Cottage, partly at the house of Sir John Middleton, who is very fond of company, of match-making, and of rather coarse jokes. It is at Sir John Middleton's that the sisters meet Colonel Brandon. There also they meet Mrs. Jennings, Sir John Middleton's mother-in-law, a thoroughly good-natured though thoroughly vulgar woman, and Lady Middleton's sister, Mrs. Palmer, with her husband. Mrs. Palmer is a lady-like Mrs. Bennet, and her husband, being very superior to her in sense, feels, like Mr. Bennet, that he has married beneath him in intellect, and shows his consciousness of it in a much less pleasant and amusing way.

Edward Ferrars appears upon the scene, stays for a week and is very loving, but departs without making a declaration. There is something mysterious and disquieting about his conduct. Presently the mystery is cleared up with a vengeance. The two Misses Steele, relatives of Mrs. Jennings, come to stay with Sir John Middleton, and the younger of the two, Miss Lucy Steele, discloses to Elinor in confidence the astounding fact that she is secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars, who fell in love with her when he was very young and while living with a private tutor. The bitterness of the revelation is enhanced by the unworthiness of Miss Lucy Steele, who is low-bred, low-minded, illiterate and pert in the highest degree. The possession of this fatal secret, with all the pangs and mortification which it entails, is

the sore trial of Elinor's sense and self-control through which she passes in triumph.

Meanwhile Willoughby, after going the utmost length short of a declaration in his love-making with Marianne, after showing her the house which is to be hers, buying the horse which she is to ride there, and cutting off a lock of her hair, suddenly takes his departure on a flimsy pretext, disquieting the sensible Elinor, though not the enthusiastic Marianne or the confiding Mrs. Dashwood. Immediately afterward, Colonel Brandon is suddenly called away from the house of Sir John Middleton.

Mrs. Jennings now takes Elinor and Marianne to town, where Marianne expects to find her Willoughby. Her Willoughby is there, but instead of rushing to her feet he keeps aloof, takes no notice of her letters when she impetuously writes to him, beyond leaving his card, and almost cuts her when they meet at a ball. She is in uncontrollable agonies of wounded love, which her more sensible sister vainly labours to assuage. The crisis comes when it transpires that Willoughby is about to be married to another woman, a Miss Grey, with fifty thousand pounds. He announces his intention to Marianne in a revoltingly heartless letter. Marianne is incapable of subduing or disguising her emotions. Transports of passion more tragical than ever ensue, while Elinor, with her own sad secret buried in her heart, displays her self-control and self-devotion to the highest advantage in supporting and comforting the weaker vessel. In the picture of Marianne's sufferings, and in the contrast between her and her sister, Jane

Austen evidently exerts all her skill and her knowledge of the female heart. Colonel Brandon now comes in with a history of Willoughby and an exposure of his character. Willoughby has seduced a girl in whom Colonel Brandon had an interest, and whom scandal called his natural daughter. There has been a duel between them on the girl's account. But even this revelation does not cure Marianne. She shows such want, not only of self-control, but of common sense, of tact, even of good manners, that we wonder how so superior a man as Colonel Brandon can wish to have her as his wife. Her intensely affectionate disposition (which, however, does not prevent her from ungenerously misinterpreting her sister's calmness) and her beauty are the attractions. Wish to have Marianne as his wife, however, Colonel Brandon does, and of course he succeeds. A dangerous illness into which she is thrown by a romantic walk in wet grass with thin shoes is the turning-point in their joint destiny, and proves the gate of happiness. Thus "Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract by her conduct her most favourite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and, with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another!—and that other a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom two years before she had considered too old to be married, and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat."

The course of Elinor's true love is also duly brought back to its channel and made to run smooth to matrimony, though by what we cannot help thinking one of the strongest measures to which Destiny has ever resorted, even in a novel. The engagement between Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele is disclosed by the indiscretion of a waiting-maid. Mrs. Ferrars and Mrs. John Dashwood, who is a true daughter of her amiable mother, are thrown into fits of rage. Edward had been destined for a daughter of Lord Morton with thirty thousand pounds. As he remains loyal to his love in spite of his mother's reproaches and threats, Mrs. Ferrars disinherits him, and somewhat precipitately settles the estate which was intended for him on his younger brother, Robert, to whom she also thinks of transferring the hand and fortune of Miss Morton, an arrangement to which it is assumed that Miss Morton will readily consent. Heigh presto! Robert turns round, and having the property now settled on him, so that he can defy his mother's wrath, cuts out his brother in the affection of Lucy Steele and carries her off, she being nothing loath to exchange her disinherited lover for one who had become securely possessed of a thousand pounds a year. Edward, his honour being thus released, happy in his loss, turns at once to his real love. Overwhelmed, of course, by the second catastrophe of her ambition, Mrs. Ferrars partly relents toward Edward and settles on him ten thousand pounds, which, with a benefice of two hundred and fifty pounds a year given him by Colonel Brandon, and for the sake of which he takes Orders, makes a future sufficient for Edward and Elinor

to marry on. "Between Barton (where Mrs. Dashwood lived) and Delaford (where both the married couples lived) there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate; and among the merits and happiness of Elinor and Marianne let it not be ranked as the least considerable that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves or producing coldness between their husbands." This is one of the passages of Jane Austen's novels in reading which we must be on our guard against taking playful irony for cynicism. A member herself of a most united family, she could not really think it difficult for two sisters and their husbands to live near each other without quarrelling.

A strange, not to say extravagant, incident in this tale is the partial rehabilitation of Willoughby, who, when he hears that Marianne is dying, posts down from London to shrive himself to her sister. His explanation is that he really was desperately in love with Marianne, but that having forfeited the favour of Mrs. Smith by his profligacy, he found it, with his habits of expenditure and his debts, absolutely necessary to marry for money. He speaks odiously of his wife, though it does not appear that she had married him for anything but love, and imputes to her dictation his heartless and ungentlemanly letter. To the male apprehension nothing could be more unsatisfactory than this defence; but if we may trust Jane Austen, the female mind is, or was in those days, very forgiving to sincere passion, even if it failed in constancy. The assurance that Willoughby had not

been trifling with Marianne's affection, but had really been over head and ears in love with her, and had been miserable at losing her, appears to relieve him of a load of guilt. It seems, too, that we have the same authority for believing that even when all is over between two lovers, a regard for the man's character still lingers in the woman's breast, and she feels a satisfaction in learning that he was not unworthy of her love. To the Mrs. Willoughby who has supplanted her apparently she is ruthless. It will be observed that in the case of Willoughby, as in that of Wickham, Jane Austen is merciful to the sinner and saves him from final perdition.

Jane Austen never fails to show great store of observation and invention in her minor characters, and in the relations, similarities, and contrasts between them. Mrs. Jennings is one of a kind which she is very fond of painting, with a good and a bad side—vulgar and rattling as she can be, a thoroughpaced matchmaker and gossip, and capable of recommending a glass of particularly old and fine constantia as a cordial for a wounded heart; yet with the best of natures, untiring in her kindness, and right in her sympathies. Sir John Middleton, with his profuse and boisterous hospitality, his good humour, his illiteracy, and his coarse jokes, is half-way between Squire Western and the country gentleman of the present day. He goes to London, which Squire Western did not; but the metropolis is to him a crowd of company in which he noisily revels untouched by the intellect or the polish. When he is asked to describe Willoughby, he says that he is a bold rider and

a very decent shot. Further questioned by the eager and indignant Marianne as to the young man's manners, acquaintances, pursuits, talents, and genius, he is puzzled. "I don't know much about him," he says, "as to all that. But he is a pleasant, good-humoured fellow, and has got the nicest black bitch of a pointer I ever saw. Was she out with him to-day?" On hearing of Willoughby's treachery he vows that he "could not speak another word to him, meet him where he might, for all the world. No, not if it were to be by the side of Barton covert, and they were kept waiting for two hours together. Such a scoundrel of a fellow, such a deceitful dog! It was only the last time they met that he had offered him one of Folly's puppies, and this was the end of it!"

Lady Middleton and Mrs. John Dashwood are touched off together. "Lady Middleton was equally pleased with Mrs. Dashwood. There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides which naturally attracted them, and they sympathized with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour and a general want of understanding." Lady Middleton, however, gets her due. In her calm and polite unconcern, Elinor finds a relief from the clamorous kindness and intrusive curiosity of others, and "as every qualification is raised at times by the circumstances of the moment to more than its real value," the afflicted soul is sometimes "worried by officious condolence into rating good breeding as more indispensable to comfort than good nature." Evidently Jane's own sense of the value of good breeding was keen. The case in which she shows

no mercy is that of the Misses Steele, vulgar alike in manners and in soul, obtrusive and malicious at the same time.

One of the best bits of "miniature painting" in the tale is the scene at the opening, where Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, having come in for great wealth, debate the duty of fulfilling the late Mr. Dashwood's dying injunction to do something for his widow and daughters. Mr. John Dashwood thinks of giving them three thousand pounds. His wife protests against his "ruining himself and their poor little Harry by giving away half his money to his half-sisters." This brings it down to five hundred pounds apiece. From five hundred pounds apiece it comes down to a small annuity for the widow. But annuities are so objectionable!

"'To be sure,' said she, 'it is better than parting with fifteen hundred pounds at once. But then, if Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years, we shall be completely taken in.'

"'Fifteen years! my dear Fanny; her life cannot be worth half that purchase.'

"'Certainly not; but if you observe, people always live for ever when there is any annuity to be paid them; and she is very stout and healthy, and hardly forty. An annuity is a very serious business; it comes over and over every year, and there is no getting rid of it. You are not aware of what you are doing. I have known a great deal of the trouble of annuities; for my mother was clogged with the payment of three old superannuated servants by my father's will, and it is amazing how disagreeable she found it. Twice every year these annuities were to be paid; and then there was the trouble of getting it to them; and then one of them was said to have died, and afterwards it turned out no such thing. My mother was quite sick of it. Her income was not her own, she said, with such perpetual claims on it; and it was more unkind in my father,

because, otherwise, the money would have been entirely at my mother's disposal, without any restrictions whatever. It has given me such an abhorrence of annuities, that I am sure I would not pin myself down to the payment of one for all the world.'

"'It is certainly an unpleasant thing,' replied Mr. Dashwood, 'to have those kind of yearly drains on one's income. One's fortune, as your mother justly says, is not one's own. To be tied down to the regular payment of such a sum, on every rent day, is by no means desirable: it takes away one's independence.'

"'Undoubtedly; and after all you have no thanks for it. They think themselves secure, you do no more than what is expected, and it raises no gratitude at all. If I were you, whatever I did should be done at my own discretion entirely. I would not bind myself to allow them anything yearly. It may be very inconvenient some years to spare a hundred, or even fifty pounds, from our own expenses.'"

An occasional present of a little money, Mr. John Dashwood opines, will be much better. But his wife convinces him by degrees that his father did not mean money at all, but only general acts of kindness, such as looking out for a house for them, and sending them presents of fish and game. Even to a present of furniture her selfishness finds plausible objections. Her clinching argument is, that the late Mr. Dashwood would have left everything to the widow and daughters if he could. This is irresistible, and Mr. John Dashwood resolves "that it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for the widow and children of his father than such sort of neighbourly acts as his wife pointed out."

Jane Austen, as we have seen, was remarkable for her love of children and her power of winning their hearts. But in this novel there are two or three passages which

seem to show that the noise and rudeness of spoilt children had sometimes made her wince.

"Fortunately for those who pay their court through such foibles, a fond mother, though, in pursuit of praise for her children, the most rapacious of human beings, is likewise the most credulous; her demands are exorbitant; but she will swallow anything; and the excessive affection and endurance of the Miss Steeles towards her offspring, were viewed therefore by Lady Middleton without the smallest surprise or distrust. She saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent encroachments and mischievous tricks to which her cousins submitted. She saw their sashes untied, their hair pulled about their ears, their work-bags searched, and their knives and scissors stolen away, and felt no doubt of its being a reciprocal enjoyment. It suggested no other surprise than that Elinor and Marianne should sit so composedly by without claiming a share in what was passing.

"'John is in such spirits to-day!' said she, on his taking Miss Steele's pocket-handkerchief, and throwing it out of window. 'He is full of monkey tricks.'

"And soon afterwards, on the second boy's violently pinching one of the same lady's fingers, she fondly observed, 'How playful William is!'

"'And here is my sweet little Anna-Maria,' she added, tenderly caressing a little girl of three years old, who had not made a noise for the last two minutes; 'and she is always so gentle and quiet—never was there such a quiet little thing!'

"But unfortunately, in bestowing these embraces, a pin in her ladyship's head-dress slightly scratching the child's neck, produced from this pattern of gentleness such violent screams as could hardly be outdone by any creature professedly noisy.

"The mother's consternation was excessive; but it could not surpass the alarm of the Miss Steeles, and everything was done by all three, in so critical an emergency, which affection could suggest as likely to assuage the agonies of the little sufferer. She was seated in her mother's lap, covered with kisses, her wound bathed with lavender-water by one of the Miss Steeles, who was on her

knees to attend her, and her mouth stuffed with sugar-plums by the other.

"With such a reward for her tears, the child was too wise to cease crying. She still screamed and sobbed lustily, kicked her two brothers for offering to touch her, and all their united soothings were ineffectual till Lady Middleton luckily remembering that in a scene of similar distress, last week, some apricot marmalade had been successfully applied for a bruised temple, the same remedy was eagerly proposed for this unfortunate scratch, and a slight intermission of screams in the young lady on hearing it, gave them reason to hope that it would not be rejected. She was carried out of the room, therefore, in her mother's arms, in quest of this medicine, and as the two boys chose to follow, though earnestly entreated by their mother to stay behind, the four young ladies were left in a quietness which the room had not known for many hours."

"Sense and Sensibility" runs, as has been already said, a good deal on the same lines of invention as "Pride and Prejudice," the parallel between Willoughby and Wickham being not less obvious than that between the two pairs of sisters. But if its writer in giving it to the world before "Pride and Prejudice," when both were ready for publication, thought it the better work of the two, she was an instance of the errors to which authors are liable in estimating their own works.

CHAPTER IV.

THE reader who would thoroughly enjoy "Northanger Abbey" must renew or make acquaintance with Mrs. Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho," the paragon of the class of romantic and sentimental novels at that time in the hands of young ladies.

"'But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with Udolpho?'

"'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'

"'Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?'

"'Oh! yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me: I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton; I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you; if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.'

"'Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.'

"'Have you, indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?'

"'I will read you their names directly; here they are in my pocket-book. "Castle of Wolfenbach," "Clermont," "Mysterious

Warnings," "Necromancer of the Black Forest," "Midnight Bell," "Orphan of the Rhine," and "Horrid Mysteries." Those will last us some time.'

"'Yes; pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?'

"'Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them.'"

"Northanger Abbey" is partly a quiz on the "Mysteries of Udolpho." It has its comic counterparts to the romantic and spectre-haunted castle, to the terrible and cruel Montoni, to the dark fate of Laurentina and the adventure of the mysterious black veil. In the course of it, a high compliment is paid to Mrs. Radcliffe, yet Mrs. Radcliffe would perhaps have preferred that "Northanger Abbey" should remain in the drawer of the unappreciative publisher, to which, as we have seen, it was long consigned.

Catherine Morland is described as setting out with comical disqualifications for the part of a heroine of romance.

"No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings, and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and, instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on

—lived to have six children more—to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads, and arms, and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features; so much for her person, and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boys' plays, and greatly preferred cricket, not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush. Indeed she had no taste for a garden, and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief, at least so it was conjectured from her always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities; her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat the 'Beggar's Petition,' and, after all, her next sister Sally could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid; by no means, she learned the fable of 'The Hare and many Friends' as quickly as any girl in England. Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinnet, so at eight years old she began. She learned a year and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life. Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother. Her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could. What a strange unaccountable character! for with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart

nor a bad temper, was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny. She was, moreover, noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house."

Yet a heroine Catherine Morland is to be. At fifteen appearances mend. Catherine begins to curl her hair and long for balls, while her looks improve so much that she hears herself called almost pretty. From fifteen to seventeen she trains herself for the part by filling her imagination with poetry and novels; and though the situation is not promising, the village supplying no materials for romance, not a single young man whose origin is unknown, a heroine's destiny is not to be baffled. Mr. Allen, the chief proprietor of the neighbourhood, and a friend of the family, is going to Bath for his gout, and his good-natured wife takes Catherine with her. So Catherine sets out on her adventures. Mrs. Morland's parting advice to her daughter is, not to be on her guard against the violence of noblemen who would run away with her, but to wrap up warm and keep accounts.

We have now a picture of Bath as it was when the spirit of Beau Nash still lingered there, when the company which thronged the queen of watering-places had not lost its unity, but assembled regularly every evening in the Rooms under the presidency of the master of ceremonies to dance, promenade, play whist, flirt, display its dresses, and exhibit its varieties of character. Mrs. Allen and Catherine at first find themselves alone in the crowd, but presently they light on Mrs. Thorpe,

an old friend of Mrs. Allen. With Mrs. Thorpe is her daughter Isabella, a beauty, and full of gushing sentiment, but vulgar-minded, heartless, and designing, with whom Catherine at once strikes up a bosom friendship, and enters into a partnership of novel reading. The party is joined by Catherine's brother James, and Isabella's brother John, who are college friends. James is engaged to Isabella, and is a good fellow. John is a specimen of a class not yet extinct. He is "a stout young man, of middling height, who, with a plain face and ungraceful form, seemed fearful of being too handsome unless he wore the dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy. He is a fast man, or a would-be fast man, and a blackguard, always talking horse, always swearing, a braggart withal and a liar. Having, as he fancies, elicited from Catherine Morland that she is the destined heiress of Mr. Allen, he makes up to her, takes her on expeditions in which his character as a man and a Jehu is displayed with results highly comical, but embarrassing to the lady. The name of Blaize Castle, the show place at Clifton, which she imagines to be a castle of romance, exercises a powerful influence on Catherine's fancy, and leads her astray from the path of strict social rectitude. Meanwhile she has been introduced to a gentleman to whom the blackguard Thorpe serves as a foil. This is the good-looking, well-bred, and eminently sensible and witty Mr. Henry Tilney, a young clergyman, the son of General Tilney, a Gloucestershire magnate. She has at the same time

formed the acquaintance of Mr. Henry Tilney's sister, the excellent and amiable Eleanor. Henry Tilney does not fall in love with her, but he is attracted by the simplicity of her character, beneath which lie right feeling and good sense. He amuses himself by talking to her and making fun of her in a good-natured way. Her feelings are much in advance of his. She admires him intensely, though in her humility she scarcely dares aspire to his love.

Now General Tilney appears upon the scene. He is a most imposing personage, eminently handsome, stately in deportment, and perfectly well-bred; but a tyrant of whose temper his family and all about him stand in awe, full of his own consequence, and greedy and grasping at the same time. He is in short the Montoni of this comic version of the "Mysteries of Udolpho." Becoming acquainted through his son and daughter with Catherine, the great man is surprisingly and overwhelmingly polite, though in the midst of his most elaborate attentions she feels the chill which he casts over all around him, and which extends even to her intercourse with his son and daughter in his presence. When the Allens leave Bath he invites her to stay with him at his seat in Gloucestershire, Northanger Abbey. An abbey and the home of Henry Tilney! The combination is too enchanting, for the name Abbey at once conjures up visions of dark cloisters, subterranean passages, ruined chapels and cells haunted by legends of ill-fated nuns. For Northanger Abbey the party set out in great state, with the General's carriage and four and outriders. At starting the General is so incensed at

finding Catherine incommoded by the packages which have been stowed into the carriage, that her new writing-desk narrowly escapes being thrown into the street. After the first stage she is transferred from the state carriage to the box of a curricle by the side of Henry Tilney, who amuses himself with exciting her fancy about the Abbey.

"'You have formed a very favourable idea of the abbey.

"'To be sure I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?'

"'And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as "what one reads about" may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?'

"'Oh! yes, I do not think I should be easily frightened, because there would be so many people in the house; and besides, it has never been uninhabited and left deserted for years, and then the family come back to it unawares, without giving any notice, as generally happens.'

"'No, certainly. We shall not have to explore our way into a hall dimly lighted by the expiring embers of a wood fire, nor be obliged to spread our beds on the floor of a room without windows, doors, or furniture. But you must be aware that when a young lady is (by whatever means) introduced into a dwelling of this kind, she is always lodged apart from the rest of the family. While they snugly repair to their own end of the house, she is formally conducted by Dorothy, the ancient housekeeper, up a different staircase, and along many gloomy passages, into an apartment never used since some cousin or kin died in it about twenty years before. Can you stand such a ceremony as this? Will not your mind misgive you when you find yourself in this gloomy chamber, too lofty and extensive for you, with only the feeble rays of a single lamp to take in its size, its walls hung with tapestry exhibiting figures as large as life, and the bed, of dark green stuff or purple velvet, presenting even a funereal appearance? Will not your heart sink within you?'

"'Oh! but this will not happen to me, I am sure.'

"'How fearfully will you examine the furniture of your apart-

ment? And what will you discern? Not tables, toilettes, wardrobes, or drawers, but on one side perhaps the remains of a broken lute, on the other a ponderous chest which no efforts can open, and over the fireplace the portrait of some handsome warrior, whose features will so incomprehensibly strike you, that you will not be able to withdraw your eyes from it. Dorothy, meanwhile, no less struck by your appearance, gazes on you in great agitation, and drops a few unintelligible hints. To raise your spirits, moreover, she gives you reason to suppose that the part of the abbey you inhabit is undoubtedly haunted, and informs you that you will not have a single domestic within call. With this parting cordial, she courtesies off: you listen to the sound of her receding footsteps as long as the last echo can reach you: and when, with fainting spirits, you attempt to fasten your door, you discover, with increased alarm, that it has no lock.'

"'Oh! Mr. Tilney, how frightful. This is just like a book! But it cannot really happen to me. I am sure your housekeeper is not really Dorothy. Well, what then?'

"'Nothing further to alarm, perhaps, may occur the first night. After surmounting your *unconquerable* horror of the bed, you will retire to rest, and get a few hours' unquiet slumber. But on the second, or at farthest the *third* night after your arrival, you will probably have a violent storm. Peals of thunder so loud as to seem to shake the edifice to its foundation will roll round the neighbouring mountains; and during the frightful gusts of wind which accompany it, you will probably think you discern (for your lamp is not extinguished) one part of the hanging more violently agitated than the rest. Unable of course to repress your curiosity in so favourable a moment for indulging it, you will instantly arise, and, throwing your dressing-gown around you, proceed to examine this mystery. After a very short search, you will discover a division in the tapestry so artfully constructed as to defy the minutest inspection, and on opening it, a door will immediately appear, which door being only secured by massy bars and a padlock, you will, after a few efforts, succeed in opening, and, with your lamp in your hand, will pass through it into a small vaulted room.'

"'No, indeed; I should be too much frightened to do any such thing.'

"'What! not when Dorothy has given you to understand that there is a secret subterraneous communication between your apartment and the chapel of St. Anthony, scarcely two miles off. Could you shrink from so simple an adventure? No, no; you will proceed into this small vaulted room, and through this into several others, without perceiving anything very remarkable in either. In one, perhaps, there may be a dagger, in another a few drops of blood, and in a third the remains of some instrument of torture; but there being nothing in all this out of the common way, and your lamp being nearly exhausted, you will return towards your own apartment. In repassing through the small vaulted room, however, your eyes will be attracted towards a large, old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold, which, though narrowly examining the furniture before, you had passed unnoticed. Impelled by an irresistible presentiment, you will eagerly advance to it, unlock its folding doors, and search into every drawer; but for some time without discovering anything of importance; perhaps nothing but a considerable hoard of diamonds. At last, however, by touching a secret spring, an inner apartment will open, a roll of paper appears, you seize it—it contains many sheets of manuscript: you hasten with the precious treasure into your own chamber, but scarcely have you been able to decipher, "Oh thou, whomsoever thou mayst be, into whose hands these memoirs of the wretched Matilda may fall," when your lamp suddenly expires in the socket, and leaves you in total darkness.'"

The Abbey turns out to be a mansion thoroughly modernized and improved to the highest pitch by the General's judicious energy. Still it is on the site of an abbey, it bears the name, it even embodies some parts of the old buildings. There is food in it yet for an excited imagination. Catherine finds herself in a bedroom unromantically comfortable. But her eye is met by a large cedar chest, curiously inlaid, with handles of silver, broken, perhaps, by some strange violence, and with a mysterious cypher on the lid. She cannot resist the impulse to look into it; with trembling hand

she raises the lid, finds that it contains a white cotton counterpane, is caught in the act by Miss Tilney, and provokes the General into a momentary revelation of the martinet by being some minutes late for dinner. The evening passes without further disturbance, and, in the occasional absence of General Tilney, with much positive cheerfulness. The hour for retiring comes. The night is stormy. Catherine, as she crosses the hall, listens to the tempest with awe, and when she hears it rage round a corner of the ancient building and slam a distant door, she feels indeed that she is in an abbey. She screws up her courage, however; persuades herself that she is quite safe and has nothing to fear from midnight assassins or ravishers, that Henry Tilney could only have been in jest, and that if the window curtains seem in motion it is only the violence of the wind. She lets her fire go out because to keep it up would be cowardly, and is stepping into bed when her eye is caught by a high old-fashioned black cabinet, which she had not noticed before.

"Henry's words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her observation at first, immediately rushed across her; and though there could be nothing really in it, there was something whimsical, it was certainly a very remarkable coincidence! She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. It was not absolutely ebony and gold; but it was Japan, black and yellow Japan of the handsomest kind; and as she held her candle, the yellow had very much the effect of gold.

"The key was in the door, and she had a strange fancy to look into it; not, however, with the smallest expectation of finding anything, but it was so very odd, after what Henry had said. In short, she could not sleep till she had examined it. So, placing the candle

with great caution on a chair, she seized the key with a very tremulous hand, and tried to turn it ; but it resisted her utmost strength. Alarmed, but not discouraged, she tried it another way ; a bolt flew, and she believed herself successful ; but how strangely mysterious ! the door was still immovable. She paused a moment in breathless wonder. The wind roared down the chimney, the rain beat in torrents against the windows, and everything seemed to speak the awfulness of her situation. To retire to bed, however, unsatisfied on such a point, would be vain, since sleep must be impossible with the consciousness of a cabinet so mysteriously closed in her immediate vicinity. Again, therefore, she applied herself to the key, and after moving it in every possible way, for some instants, with the determined celerity of hope's last effort, the door suddenly yielded to her hand : her heart leaped with exultation at such a victory, and having thrown open each folding door, the second being secured only by bolts of less wonderful construction than the lock, though in that her eye could not discern anything unusual, a double range of small drawers appeared in view, with some larger drawers above and below them, and in the centre, a small door, closed also with lock and key, secured in all probability a cavity of importance.

"Catherine's heart beat quick, but her courage did not fail her. With a cheek flushed by hope, and an eye straining with curiosity, her fingers grasped the handle of a drawer and drew it forth. It was entirely empty. With less alarm and greater eagerness she seized a second, a third, a fourth—each was equally empty. Not one was left unsearched, and in not one was anything found. Well read in the art of concealing a treasure, the possibility of false linings to the drawers did not escape her, and she felt round each with anxious acuteness in vain. The place in the middle alone remained now unexplored ; and though she had 'never from the first had the smallest idea of finding anything in any part of the cabinet, and was not in the least disappointed at her ill success thus far, it would be foolish not to examine it thoroughly while she was about it.' It was some time, however, before she could unfasten the door, the same difficulty occurring in the management of this inner lock as of the outer ; but at length it did open ; and not vain, as hitherto, was her search ; her quick eyes directly fell on a roll of paper pushed back into the further part of the cavity, apparently

for concealment, and her feelings at that moment were indescribable. Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale. She seized, with an unsteady hand, the precious manuscript, for half a glance sufficed to ascertain written characters; and while she acknowledged with awful sensations this striking exemplification of what Henry had foretold, resolved instantly to peruse every line before she attempted to rest.

"The dimness of the light her candle emitted made her turn to it with alarm; but there was no danger of its sudden extinction, it had yet some hours to burn; and that she might not have any greater difficulty in distinguishing the writing than what its ancient date might occasion, she hastily snuffed it. Alas! it was snuffed and extinguished in one. A lamp could not have expired with more awful effect. Catherine, for a few moments, was motionless with horror. It was done completely; not a remnant of light in the wick could give hope to the rekindling breath. Darkness impenetrable and immovable filled the room. A violent gust of wind, rising with sudden fury, added fresh horror to the moment. Catherine trembled from head to foot. In the pause which succeeded, a sound like receding footsteps and the closing of a distant door struck on her affrighted ear. Human nature could support no more. A cold sweat stood on her forehead, the manuscript fell from her hand, and, groping her way to the bed, she jumped hastily in, and sought some suspension of agony by creeping far underneath the clothes. To close her eyes in sleep that night she felt must be entirely out of the question. With a curiosity so justly awakened, and feelings in every way so agitated, repose must be absolutely impossible. The storm, too, abroad so dreadful! She had not been used to feel alarm from wind, but now every blast seemed fraught with awful intelligence. The manuscript so wonderfully found, so wonderfully accomplishing the morning's prediction, how was it to be accounted for? What could it contain? to whom could it relate? by what means could it have been so long concealed? and how singularly strange that it should fall to her lot to discover it! Till she had made herself mistress of its contents, however, she could have neither repose nor comfort; and with the sun's first rays she was determined to peruse it. But many were the tedious hours which must yet intervene. She shuddered, tossed about in

her bed, and envied every quiet sleeper. The storm still raged, and various were the noises, more terrific even than the wind, which struck at intervals on her startled ear. The very curtains of her bed seemed at one moment in motion, and at another the lock of her door was agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter. Hollow murmurs seemed to creep along the gallery, and more than once her blood was chilled by the sound of distant moans. Hour after hour passed away, and the wearied Catherine had heard three proclaimed by all the clocks in the house, before the tempest subsided, or she unknowingly fell fast asleep."

As soon as she wakes in the morning she glances with greedy eye over the mysterious manuscript, and finds that it is an inventory of linen.

Once more her romantic fancy betrays her. General Tilney is a widower, and Catherine divines, rightly enough it seems, that his wife was not happy, though we know from a remark of Mrs. Allen's that he got a good lump of money with her. This raises recollections of Montoni and his treatment of his ill-starred wife. Is he not like Montoni, moody and austere, and does he not show that he has something on his conscience by sitting up late at night and taking solitary walks? If any faith is to be placed in romances, Mrs. Tilney may be still living and a prisoner, while a wax image has been buried in her place. There is a set of rooms into which the General, in showing Catherine over the house, has not taken her. She imagines that it must hide his guilty secret. She attempts clandestinely to explore it, is caught in the act by Henry Tilney, lets out her secret with her usual simplicity under his cross-examination, and is covered with confusion.

The General's attentions all this time are constant and

laborious. In person he shows Catherine over the place and the improvements, makes her uncomfortable by scolding his children for not treating her with sufficient courtesy, and pays her a profusion of icy compliments. Finally he takes her in the carriage and four to spend a day with Henry Tilney at his parsonage, twenty miles from Northanger, shows her over its house and grounds, and, with the most deferential air, asks her opinion about the furnishing and papering of it in a manner which shows that he looks upon it as her future home. She admires a cottage which comes into the view and which it had been intended to pull down. "You like it," says the General, "you approve it as an object. It is enough. Henry, remember that Robinson is spoken to about it. The cottage remains." Manifestly General Tilney is resolved that Catherine Morland shall be his son Henry's wife, though the great man's motive for desiring so humble an alliance is a mystery. The mystery is cleared up and a catastrophe is brought on by the progress of events elsewhere.

The General is called away from home on business. He leaves Catherine in the care of his son and daughter, with whom she greatly enjoys herself in his absence. One night suddenly, like a thunderclap, he returns. A hesitating step is presently heard at the door of Catherine's room. It is that of Miss Tilney, who has come in tears to say that her father has returned in a state of high displeasure, that the family are to leave home in two days, and that Catherine is to be sent away the very next morning. The carriage has been peremptorily ordered for her at seven o'clock, and she is not even to have the

escort of a servant, so necessary to a young lady travelling in the posting days. What can be the reason of her father's wrath and of his cruel conduct to her friend, Miss Tilney cannot divine. Catherine thinks of the suspicion she had conceived about Montoni's treatment of his wife; but it is impossible that Henry Tilney can have betrayed her. The truth is that the General has been in a fool's paradise, into which he has been led by the lying tongue of Jack Thorpe. Believing that his sister Isabella was going to marry James Morland, and having himself thoughts of Catherine, Jack Thorpe had bragged to the General, whom he met at Bath, of the wealth and consequence of the Morland family, "throwing in a rich aunt," and representing Catherine as the destined heiress of Mr. Allen's estate. Swallowing all this with the eager credulity of greed, the General had resolved to secure Catherine for his younger son, and had taken her to Northanger with that view. But now Jack Thorpe has lost all hope of Catherine, and at the same time his sister, the highly sentimental and romantically disinterested Isabella, finding that James Morland would only have four hundred a year, has thrown him over, and is trying, though in vain, to catch Captain Tilney, Henry's elder brother, in his place. All prospect of connection with the Morland family being at an end, Jack changes his note, and, meeting General Tilney again, gives him an account of the Morlands quite opposite to that which he had given in the first instance, understating their wealth and consequence as much as he had overstated them before. He winds up by saying that he knew the heir of the Allen property. This it is

that sends the General home in a transport of disappointment and rage, and makes him behave to poor Catherine as badly as any tyrant of romance. Catherine wends her sad and solitary way to her home, and there pensively settles down, often going over to Mrs. Allen for the pleasure of hearing her speak of Henry Tilney, but never expecting to see him again.

Of course she does see him again. What was at first on Henry's part merely interest in a simple and amusing character, has been ripened by intercourse into love, to which he is true notwithstanding the paternal ban. One day he presents himself at Catherine's home, offers his hand, and is accepted, though her father's decision is suspended till that of General Tilney shall have been obtained. Just at this time Miss Tilney marries a Viscount, and the General is put in good humour by having a daughter whom he can address as "My Lady." The prayers of a Viscount and Viscountess prevail. Catherine's circumstances and expectations are found, though not so good as Jack Thorpe at first said they were, better than he afterwards painted them. The General issues his edict that Henry may make a fool of himself if he pleases, and the marriage bells are ringing as the curtain falls.

CHAPTER V.

SOME will think that of all Miss Austen's works "Emma" is the best. Its heroine is certainly not the least charming.

"'Such an eye!—the true hazel eye—and so brilliant! regular features, open countenance, with a complexion—oh, what a bloom of full health, and such a pretty height and size! such a firm and upright figure! There is health not merely in her bloom, but in her air, her head, her glance. One hears something of a child being "the picture of health"; now, Emma always gives me the idea of being the complete picture of grown-up health. She is loveliness itself. Mr. Knightley, is not she?'"

Emma is the daughter of Mr. Woodhouse, known even to some who have never read Miss Austen as the typical valetudinarian who "likes his gruel thin, but not too thin." They live at Hartfield, close to the large village or little town of Highbury, in Hertfordshire. Hartfield is close to Highbury, but not in it: it stands in grounds of its own, and though it has but little of the land which in those days was the great and almost sole basis of rural rank,—its acres being a mere notch in the estate of Mr. Knightley, of Donwell Abbey,—its denizens distinctly belong to the gentry, having other property, being

a younger branch of a good family, and one for several generations not stained by labour. Emma's only sister, Isabella, being married to Mr. John Knightley, a lawyer in London and brother of Mr. Knightley, of Donwell Abbey, she lives alone with her father, is mistress of Hartfield, and the great lady and the great match of Highbury. The party at Hartfield had been three, the third being the excellent Miss Taylor, who had been Emma's governess, and when Emma had outgrown the schoolroom remained as a friend. But "poor Miss Taylor," as Mr. Woodhouse always mournfully calls her, has married the good-humoured Mr. Weston. They live at Randalls, close to Hartfield. Mrs. Weston, into whose mouth the description of Emma just quoted is put, still feels a maternal interest in her former pupil, with whom she is in constant intercourse.

Emma has her faults. She lost her mother early. She has had things too much her own way. She has been made to think too much of herself. Her satirical propensities have not been checked. She has had no match for her cleverness. Highbury has afforded her no equal as a friend. Her father has doted on her and seen nothing in her but perfection. Her governess has been too fond of her to play a governess's part. One clear-sighted critic and faithful monitor she has had in the person of her brother-in-law, Mr. Knightley, of Donwell Abbey, to whom the rapturous description of her beauty just quoted is addressed by Mrs. Weston. He is Emma's senior by sixteen years, and when she playfully challenges his right of censorship, tells her that he has the advantage of her not only in those sixteen years, but in not

being a pretty woman. He is a model of honour and good sense, as well as a perfect gentleman in appearance and manner. He has also a vein of sarcastic humour. Emma regards him with the utmost affection and respect. He feels a loving interest in Emma, sees her weak points, and wonders what will become of her. What will become of her she has herself hardly begun to think. She is mistress of Hartfield, and devoted to her father, who dotes on her in return.

Emma fancies that she has resolved not to marry. She cannot leave her father. But she busies herself in making matches for others, a propensity against which Knightley has warned her. This, with her vanity, of which indeed it is a part, gets her into a scrape which is the most amusing part of the tale. At the ladies' school in Highbury kept by Mrs. Goddard, there is a parlour-boarder named Harriet Smith, of whom nothing is known except that she is the illegitimate daughter of somebody who has consigned her to Mrs. Goddard's care. She is a pretty, simple-minded, common-place girl, with soft look, blue eyes, and humble-minded till her ambition is artificially excited. For want of a more equal and suitable friendship, Emma Woodhouse takes up Harriet Smith and undertakes to improve her tastes, form her manners, and find her a good match. Mr. Knightley's sagacity frowns on the connection from the beginning, though Mrs. Weston's indulgence approves it. Mr. Knightley rightly judges that Harriet is the worst kind of companion that Emma could have, because, knowing nothing herself, she thinks that Emma knows everything. "Her ignorance and inferiority are hourly flattery, and of all

flatteries the worst because undesigned." Harriet already has a lover in the person of Robert Martin, a worthy young gentleman farmer and the tenant of Mr. Knightley's home farm, with whose family she has been staying, and she is evidently disposed to return his love. But a match with a yeoman is beneath a girl honoured by the friendship of Miss Emma Woodhouse. Emma sets herself to wean Harriet from the attachment and to teach her to look higher. The object to which she turns her eyes is Mr. Elton, the new vicar of Highbury, a most beautiful young man and the social idol of the village. His company is so sought after that he has more invitations than there are days in the week, and so excellent is his performance in the church that Miss Nash, the teacher, has put down all the texts that he has preached from. The first time Harriet saw him, "the two Abbotts and she ran into the front room and peeped through the blind when they heard he was going by, and Miss Nash came and scolded them away and stayed to look through herself." Only, the critical Mr. Knightley remarks, that while Elton can be rational with men, to women he is so laboriously agreeable that "every feature works" in the effort to please. This clerical Adonis is perfectly conscious of his own merit and value in the marriage mart, as Emma and her Harriet will find to their cost. Emma does everything she can to bring Harriet and Mr. Elton together. To herself she appears successful, though the reader has his suspicions. She paints Harriet's portrait. Mr. Elton is in ecstasies, and himself carries it to London to be framed, giving up the whist club for the purpose. Harriet is collecting riddles. Mr. Elton writes an

amatory conundrum which appears to be pointed at Harriet, though it contains a suspicious compliment to "ready wit." In the meantime, Robert Martin proposes in a letter which, as Emma is obliged to admit, expresses good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, and delicacy of feeling. Harriet, if left to herself, evidently would accept, but under Emma's influence she refuses, Emma virtually dictating her reply. This is not a very agreeable part of the story. Whether the writer intended it or not, Emma in breaking off the connection between Robert Martin and Harriet shows not only want of judgment but want of feeling. Her notions of social grade, and her dislike of the yeomanry as a class which she can neither associate with nor patronize, also shock us, though they might have been less offensive in those more aristocratic days. We are glad to know from the kindliness with which the yeoman is painted that the sentiment is that of Miss Emma Woodhouse, not that of Miss Jane Austen. Mr. Knightley, who has a high opinion of Martin and had been his adviser on the occasion, is highly displeased at Emma's conduct, and his displeasure is most just.

Its justice soon appears. The catastrophe is at hand. It is not to Harriet that Mr. Elton's addresses have been really paid, but to Emma herself. He has dared to aspire to the hand of the great lady and the great match of Highbury. The transports into which he threw himself over the portrait were in fact directed not to its subject but to the artist. Emma was really the lady of the riddle. Finding himself by a propitious accident shut up in a carriage with Emma on their return from a

dinner-party at Mr. Weston's, he astounds and horrifies her by pouring forth his love. It marks the manners of the time that at first she fancies he is drunk. When she intimates that it was to her friend that his intentions were supposed to be addressed, he speaks of the friend with rude disdain. His audacious suit is of course rejected. Shortly afterwards he makes good his estimate of himself as a match by going to Bath and there securing the hand of the dashing and accomplished Miss Augusta Hawkins, who has a reputed fortune of ten thousand pounds, and whose married sister, Mrs. Suckling, lives at Maple Grove and keeps a barouche-landau. He brings his bride to Highbury amidst universal excitement and almost universal applause.

Emma now rues her match-making. She has to undergo the bitter penance of undeceiving Harriet about Mr. Elton, while she has great difficulty in stifling the voice of her conscience, which reproaches her with her error in having broken off Harriet's connection with Robert Martin. Harriet being lowly-minded and having only dared to lift her eyes to Mr. Elton because Emma encouraged her, takes the wreck of her hope well, but she does not get Mr. Elton entirely out of her heart till he is married and another fancy has taken possession of her mind. Then we have the following scene :

"A very few days had passed after this adventure, when Harriet came one morning to Emma with a small parcel in her hand, and after sitting down and hesitating, thus began :—

"'Miss Woodhouse—if you are at leisure, I have something that I should like to tell you ; a sort of confession to make—and then, you know, it will be over.'

"'Emma was a good deal surprised; but begged her to speak. There was a seriousness in Harriet's manner which prepared her, quite as much as her words, for something more than ordinary.

"'"It is my duty, and I am sure it is my wish,' she continued, 'to have no reserves with you on this subject. As I am, happily, quite an altered creature, in *one respect*, it is very fit that you should have the satisfaction of knowing it. I do not want to say more than is necessary; I am too much ashamed of having given way as I have done, and I dare say you understand me.'

"'"Yes,' said Emma, 'I hope I do.'

"'"How I could so long a time be fancying myself—' cried Harriet, warmly. 'It seems like madness! I can see nothing at all extraordinary in him now. I do not care whether I meet him or not, except that, of the two, I had rather not see him; and, indeed, I would go any distance round to avoid him; but I do not envy his wife in the least: I neither admire her nor envy her, as I have done. She is very charming, I dare say, and all that; but I think her very ill-tempered and disagreeable: I shall never forget her look the other night. However, I assure you, Miss Woodhouse, I wish her no evil. No; let them be ever so happy together, it will not give me another moment's pang; and, to convince you that I have been speaking truth, I am going to destroy—what I ought to have destroyed longed ago—what I ought never to have kept: I know that very well (blushing as she spoke). However, now I will destroy it all; and it is my particular wish to do it in your presence, that you may see how rational I am grown. Cannot you guess what this parcel holds?' said she, with a conscious look.

"'"Not the least in the world. Did he ever give you anything?'

"'"No—I cannot call them gifts; but they are things that I have valued very much.'

"She held the parcel towards her, and Emma read the words 'Most precious treasures,' on the top. Her curiosity was greatly excited. Harriet unfolded the parcel, and she looked on with impatience. Within abundance of silver paper was a pretty little Tunbridge-ware box, which Harriet opened: it was well lined with the softest cotton; but, excepting the cotton, Emma saw only a small piece of court-plaister.

"'"Now,' said Harriet, 'you *must* recollect.'

"'No, indeed I do not.'

"'Dear me! I should not have thought it possible you could forget what passed in this very room about court-plaister, one of the very last times we ever met in it. It was but a very few days before I had my sore throat—just before Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley came; I think the very evening. Do you not remember his cutting his finger with your new penknife, and your recommending court-plaister? But, as you had none about you, and knew I had, you desired me to supply him; and so I took mine out, and cut him a piece: but it was a great deal too large, and he cut it smaller, and kept playing some time with what was left before he gave it back to me. And so then, in my nonsense, I could not help making a treasure of it: so I put it by, never to be used, and looked at it now and then as a great treat.'

"'My dearest Harriet!' cried Emma, putting her hand before her face and jumping up, 'you make me more ashamed of myself than I can bear. Remember it? Ay, I remember it all now; all, except your saving this relic: I knew nothing of that till this moment,—but the cutting the finger, and my recommending court-plaister, and saying I had none about me.—Oh! my sins, my sins!—And I had plenty all the while in my pocket! One of my senseless tricks. I deserve to be under a continual blush all the rest of my life. Well (sitting down again), go on: what else?'

"'And had you really some at hand yourself? I am sure I never suspected it, you did it so naturally.'

"'And so you actually put this piece of court-plaister by for his sake?' said Emma, recovering from her state of shame and feeling, divided between wonder and amusement; and secretly she added to herself, 'Lord bless me! when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court-plaister that Frank Churchill had been pulling about! I never was equal to this.'

"'Here,' resumed Harriet, turning to her box again, 'here is something still more valuable,—I mean that *has been* more valuable,—because this is what did really once belong to him, which the court-plaister never did.'

"Emma was quite eager to see this superior treasure. It was the end of an old pencil, the part without any lead.

"'This was really his,' said Harriet. 'Do not you remember

one morning?—no, I dare say you do not. But one morning—I forget exactly the day—but perhaps it was the Tuesday or Wednesday before *that evening*, he wanted to make a memorandum in his pocket-book; it was about spruce-beer. Mr. Knightley had been telling him something about brewing spruce-beer, and he wanted to put it down; but when he took out his pencil, there was so little lead that he soon cut it all away, and it would not do, so you lent him another, and this was left upon the table as good for nothing. But I kept my eye on it; and, as soon as I dared, caught it up, and never parted with it again from that moment.'

"'I do remember it,' cried Emma; 'I perfectly remember it. Talking about spruce-beer. Oh! yes. Mr. Knightley and I both saying we liked it, and Mr. Elton's seeming resolved to learn to like it too. I perfectly remember it. Stop—Mr. Knightley was standing just here, was not he? I have an idea he was standing just here.'

"'Ah! I do not know. I cannot recollect. It is very odd, but I cannot recollect. Mr. Elton was sitting here, I remember, much about where I am now.'

"'Well, go on.'

"'Oh! that's all. I have nothing more to show you, or to say, except that I am now going to throw them both behind the fire, and I wish you to see me do it.'

"'My poor dear Harriet! and have you actually found happiness in treasuring up these things?'

"'Yes, simpleton as I was!—but I am quite ashamed of it now, and wish I could forget as easily as I can burn them. It was very wrong of me, you know, to keep any remembrances after he was married. I knew it was—but had not resolution enough to part with them.'

"'But, Harriet, is it necessary to burn the court-plaister? I have not a word to say for the bit of old pencil, but the court-plaister might be useful.'

"'I shall be happier to burn it,' cried Harriet. 'It has a disagreeable look to me. I must get rid of everything. There it goes, and there is an end, thank Heaven! of Mr. Elton.'"

The Mr. Frank Churchill here mentioned is the young

man whom destiny seems to have provided for Emma herself. He is the son of Mr. Weston by a former marriage, and has been adopted by wealthy relatives in Yorkshire whose name he has taken, and whose fortune he is to inherit. He has been always coming to Highbury, but has never come, being prevented, as he says, by the tyrannical caprice of Mrs. Churchill, who will not let him leave her side. Mr. and Mrs. Weston have however, filled Highbury with the report of his perfections, and they have been cherishing the hope of a match between him and Emma. At last he comes, and he proves to be in person, manners and conversation everything that Highbury believed him to be, and becomes generally popular. Mr. Knightley alone, who had conceived a prejudice against the young man before his arrival, remains rather unaccountably set against him. To Emma, who had felt a natural interest in him beforehand, he pays the most marked attention. Emma receives the attentions with pleasure, and Mr. and Mrs. Weston think that their hope is going to be fulfilled. But Emma, though at one time on the brink of love, does not go beyond the brink.

Mr. Frank Churchill's arrival, however, had been immediately followed by that of Miss Jane Fairfax, who came to stay with her grandmother and aunt, Mrs. and Miss Bates, at Highbury. Miss Fairfax is very beautiful and highly accomplished, but she is a child of misfortune. She has been brought up by charitable friends, and is now, as it is given out, going to earn bitter bread as a governess. She is demure and very reserved. There is something mysterious about her. Apparently

she has something on her mind besides the necessity of going out as a governess. Emma dislikes her, partly because she is tired of hearing the Bateses sing her praises, partly on account of her reserve, partly, as the censorious Mr. Knightley suggests, on account of her superior accomplishments. Jane has met Frank Churchill at Weymouth, but cannot be induced to talk about him. For his part he affects to regard Jane as a mere acquaint ance, and in talking about her to Emma criticises her character, her complexion, and her way of dressing her hair, as though she were entirely indifferent to him. He even seems to share an injurious fancy which Emma had conceived about a previous part of Jane's history. At the same time he goes a good deal, on various pretences, to the house of the Bateses, which, as Mrs. Bates is deaf and her daughter is an insufferably garrulous old maid, he would not be likely to do without some other attraction. To the keen eye of Mr. Knightley, an interchange of looks and other signs of intelligence between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax begin to be visible. Jane plays divinely on the piano, but has no instrument. Frank Churchill goes all the way to London to have his hair cut. Immediately afterwards Jane Fairfax receives from an unknown donor the gift of a Broadwood piano. Still Frank Churchill continues to flirt with Emma, and the hope of Mr. and Mrs. Weston is confirmed.

Other complications arise. Mr. Knightley, by the high opinion which, partly in opposition to Emma's prejudice, he expresses of Jane Fairfax, by his delight at her playing on the piano, and by the attention which

he shows her and her aunt in sending his carriage to take them to a party, gives birth to a belief, especially in the mind of Mr. Weston, that he is falling in love with Jane. He is suspected of being the giver of the mysterious piano. He, however, contradicts and laughs at the report in a manner which satisfies Emma, who knows the perfect openness of his character. But this, as will presently appear, is not the only false impression to which his kindness and courtesy give rise.

Harriet, while she is taking a walk with another girl, is mobbed by a gang of gipsies. She is rescued by Frank Churchill. An interesting situation is thus created, and Emma, whose fancy is incorrigibly match-making, and who had already been led to form surmises in that direction, thinks that it must lead to love. In a conversation with Harriet on the subject, her conjecture is apparently confirmed, and she goes away with the belief that Harriet at all events is in love with Frank. Mindful of her former misadventure, she tries to give her friend sage counsel, advises her to check his feelings, bids her be observant of the object of her aspirations, and let his behaviour be the guide of her sensations. At the same time she owns that more wonderful things have happened and matches of greater disparity have taken place. Harriet has not mentioned the name, and Emma in her extreme caution desires that no name may ever pass their lips. She and Harriet are at cross-purposes, as soon appears.

The plots runs on, with great variety of social accidents and lively play of character, through a series of scenes, including two dinner-parties, a ball, a garden-

party and a picnic; the subordinate personages, Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley, Mr. and Mrs. Elton, Mrs. and Miss Bates, performing their several parts. The mystery of the situation is all the time artfully preserved.

The mystery is cleared up and the play is brought to its conclusion by the death of the great Mrs. Churchill. Frank Churchill, being now set free, avows a secret engagement to Jane Fairfax. It was in reality to meet her that he had come to Highbury. His attentions to Emma had been either a mere mask for his connection with Jane, or an indulgence of his vanity and his love of amusement. They had, however, excited the jealousy of his betrothed enough to bring on a quarrel between them which made her look in earnest for a situation as a governess, and to produce very strained relations between Jane and Emma, so that Jane had avoided Emma's visits and refused to take an airing in the Hartfield carriage or to eat arrowroot from the Hartfield storeroom. The Westons having remained under their fond delusion, Emma is taken to Randalls by Mr. Weston, that his wife may there break to her what they both suppose will be dreadful news. They find to their relief that she is heart-whole.

Emma may rejoice in her own escape, but she has a second time to do penance for her match-making propensities by breaking the sad news of Frank Churchill's engagement to her unlucky Harriet. This she proceeds to do; but she finds to her surprise that the tidings have reached Harriet already and affect her not at all. The man of whom Harriet had been speaking in her

last conversation with Emma was not Frank Churchill, for whom she cares nothing, but one infinitely his superior. It was Mr. Knightley, and by Mr. Knightley, she thinks she has reason to hope, her affection is returned. Emma is thunderstruck. Harriet sees it, and acknowledges that Mr. Knightley is far above her, but reminds Emma of her own encouraging words about the possible occurrence of marriages of disparity, and hopes that Emma is too good to oppose the match. Instantly the state of Emma's own heart is revealed to her. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having reason to hope that her affection was returned? "It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself."

Harriet, however, is ready with her proofs. Emma had told her to observe the gentleman's demeanour, and she has observed it. At the ball, when Mr. Elton had rudely refused to dance with Harriet and she was left forlorn, Mr. Knightley had come to the rescue and been her partner. At the garden-party at his house he had walked with her apart from the rest of the company. It is true, too, that he has been speaking with pleasure of the improvement which he found in Harriet, and he seemed to like her society. Emma is plunged in misery, and her suffering is all the greater because she owes it partly to her own folly in having excited and encouraged Harriet's ambition, though she had little dreamed that her own Mr. Knightley was its mark.

It is needless to say that Harriet is totally mistaken.

Mr. Knightley has never thought of her. He danced with her at the ball out of compassion and courtesy. When he took her for a walk with him at Donwell it was to show her an attractive view of Robert Martin's farm. If he has sought to improve his acquaintance with her it has been in the hope of bringing her and Martin together again. His real attraction has been to Emma, as Emma's has been to him. Friendship on both sides has been gradually warmed and ripened into love. Of this, looking back, we see that there have been intimations all along. At the ball Emma cannot bear that Mr. Knightley should, instead of standing up to dance, be classing himself with the fathers and husbands and whist-players, so young as he looked. "His tall, upright, firm figure among the bulky forms and stooping shoulders of the elderly men was such as Emma felt must draw everybody's eyes." Later in the evening, when he has been dancing with Harriet Smith, and Mr. Weston is heard calling on them to begin dancing again—

"'I am ready,' said Emma, 'whenever I am wanted.'

"'Whom are you going to dance with?' asked Mr. Knightley.

"She hesitated a moment and then replied, 'With you, if you will ask me.'

"'Will you?' said he, offering his hand.

"'Indeed I will. You have shown that you can dance, and you know that we are really not so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper.'

"'Brother and sister! no, indeed.'"

The prejudice which Knightley, usually so just, allowed himself to form against Frank Churchill before

he had seen him, was in fact unconscious jealousy twin-born with unconscious love. Emma's disturbance when it was supposed that Knightley was falling in love with Jane Fairfax, and her anxiety to prove that the belief was false, were corresponding indications on her side.

Believing that Emma had given her hand to Frank Churchill, Knightley had left home and gone to stay with his brother and sister-in-law in London, where, however, the picture of wedded happiness only added a sting to his sorrow. Returning to Highbury when Frank Churchill's engagement to Jane Fairfax has been declared, he calls at Hartfield in his character of friend and counsellor to comfort Emma. To his surprise and delight, he finds that, so far as Frank Churchill is concerned, she needs no comfort. To her surprise and delight, as they are walking together in the shrubbery he tells his love, and misery gives place to perfect happiness. They go in, an engaged couple, to tea with Mr. Woodhouse, who, little suspecting that the man is going to rob him of his Emma, expresses his anxious hope that he may not have caught cold from the dampness of the evening. "Could he have seen into the heart, he would have cared very little for the lungs." It is a really charming scene.

Knightley and Emma are in bliss. But poor Harriet Smith is cast out of it a second time. Amidst the glow of happiness brought on by Knightley's declaration, Emma had time to rejoice that Harriet's secret had not escaped her, and to resolve that it never should. But we are called upon specially to remark that she had not any of that "heroism of sentiment," that "generosity

run mad," which could lead her for a moment to think of trying to transfer Knightley's affections to her friend, or of refusing him because he could not marry them both, as the heroines of romantic fiction might have done. But Harriet, as might have been foreseen, is united to her Robert Martin.

Nor is Mr. Woodhouse forgotten. His consternation of course is extreme. Emma, the best of daughters, cannot think of leaving her father. But Mr. Knightley promises to leave Donwell and live at Hartfield. A robbery which providentially takes place in the neighbourhood makes the nervous old gentleman feel the need of a stout protector, and he allows the marriage to take place without delay.

Lord Brabourne cannot endure Knightley, thinks that he interferes too much, judges other people too quickly and too harshly, that he is too old for Emma, and that there is something incongruous in her marrying the elder brother of her elder sister's husband. He thinks that Knightley does not rise above the standard of respectability, that he is too respectable to be a hero at all. He is certain "that Emma was not nearly so happy as she pretended, that her husband frequently lectured her, was jealous of every agreeable man that ventured to say a civil word to her, and evinced his intellectual superiority by such a plethora of eminently sensible conversations as either speedily hurried her to an untimely grave or induced her to run away with somebody possessed of an inferior intellect but more endearing qualities." The woman judged otherwise, and we feel pretty sure that her judgment was right. The vine had found its sup-

porting elm, and we do not believe that the elm ever lectured its encircling vine, much less that it lectured in such a style as to cause untimely death or elopement. We have some misgivings, however, as to the final persistence of Mrs. Knightley never to tell Mr. Knightley Harriet Smith's secret, especially as Mr. Martin's farm was in sight from the lime-walk of Donwell Abbey.

"Emma" is very rich in character, especially in the comic varieties, and in the social incident by which character is brought out. Highbury, just as Highbury was in those quiet days, lives and acts before us.

Mr. Woodhouse's valetudinarianism is perhaps a little overdone, as when he proposes to a whole party to join him in a little water gruel, and his nervous tremors about the weather, open doors and dangerous corners in driving, would be extreme in the picture of an old lady, and are scarcely credible in a picture of an old gentleman. Still he is excellent fun. His benevolence leads him to watch not only over his own digestion, but over the digestion of his friends; and his daughter has to take care that he does not out of sheer kindness starve his guests, and that when she has provided a good dinner or supper her friends are permitted to eat it. He tenderly reproaches her with having allowed the muffin to be handed round more than once. His horror of marriage, which disturbs the even tenor of his life, is interrupted by his fear of wedding-cake, which he vainly tries to prevent everybody from eating, having armed himself with the formal opinion of his medical oracle, Mr. Parry, that wedding-cake, unless eaten in moderation, may disagree with most people. When Emma goes out to a party,

leaving Mrs. Goddard and Mrs. Bates to spend the evening with her father, and having provided a good supper for the two old ladies, who do not get good suppers at home, we at once foresee what will happen. It does happen : the sweetbread and asparagus, of which Mrs. Bates happened to be particularly fond, are pronounced not cooked enough and are sent away, while the two old ladies are regaled on baked apples and biscuits. Yet nobody, not even his strong-minded and somewhat sarcastic son-in-law, John Knightley, has a word of anything but respect and regard for Mr. Woodhouse. He owes this in part to his social position, mainly to his genuine kindness and courtesy, while Emma's devotion is in itself enough to keep ridicule at bay. His other daughter, Isabella, wrapped up in her husband and children, and, if not a valetudinarian, fully entering into Mr. Woodhouse's valetudinarianism, is more her father's child, while Emma is apparently more the child of the lost mother. The same skill is shown in making the distinction between the characters of the two brothers Knightley, the two being cast in the same mould and equal in general worth, but that of the elder being superior in depth, tenderness, and refinement to that of the younger, who perhaps, as a lawyer, has something of professional hardness.

The Eltons are also excellent—Mr. Elton, the clerical Adonis and the idol of school-teachers and school-girls, thoroughly conscious of his own perfections and filled with disgust at the thought of his being deemed not too good for Harriet Smith ; Mrs. Elton, accomplished and dashing, but intensely conceited, pushing and ill-bred,

always boasting of her relations to the Sucklings, their Maple Grove and their barouche-landau, coolly seating herself as soon as she sets foot in Highbury by the side of Emma on the social throne, surprised to find that the person who had brought Emma up was "quite a gentlewoman," talking of "Knightley," making herself the centre of everything, patronizing everybody, and promising to find Jane Fairfax a situation as governess in a family where they have wax candles in the schoolroom. "Insufferable woman" is the reflection which naturally bursts from Emma after their first interview. But to the reader Mrs. Elton is very far from being insufferable.

But no character in the tale is more amusing than that of Miss Bates, the worthy old maid, happy in eking out a narrow income and taking care of a failing mother, universally popular from her effusive goodness of heart, and at the same time supremely ridiculous from the confusion which reigns in her brain and is poured forth by her voluble tongue. Mr. Woodhouse, whom, as a quiet talker upon little matters and a retailer of harmless gossip, she exactly suits, has sent her a present of Hartfield pork, with anxious directions as to the manner in which it is to be cooked. At the same time arrives the news that Mr. Elton is going to be married. Miss Bates rushes in, overflowing at once with excitement about the news and with gratitude for the present of pork.

"Full of thanks, and full of news, Miss Bates knew not which to give quickest. Mr. Knightley soon saw that he had lost his moment, and that not another syllable of communication could rest with him.

"'Oh, my dear sir, how are you this morning? My dear Miss

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Woodhouse—I come quite overpowered. Such a beautiful hind-quarter of pork! You are too bountiful? Have you heard the news? Mr. Elton is going to be married.'

"Emma had not had time even to think of Mr. Elton, and she was so completely surprised that she could not avoid a little start, and a little blush, at the sound.

"'There is my news—I thought it would interest you,' said Mr. Knightley, with a smile, which implied a conviction of some part of what had passed between them.

"'But where could *you* hear it?' cried Miss Bates. 'Where could you possibly hear it, Mr. Knightley? For it is not five minutes since I received Mrs. Cole's note—no, it cannot be more than five—or at least ten—for I had got my bonnet and spencer on, just ready to come out—I was only gone down to speak to Patty again about the pork—Jane was standing in the passage—were you not, Jane?—for my mother was so afraid that we had not any salting-pan large enough. So I said I would go down and see, and Jane said, "Shall I go down instead? for I think you have a little cold, and Patty has been washing the kitchen."—"Oh, my dear,"—said I—well, and just then came the note. A Miss Hawkins—that's all I know. A Miss Hawkins of Bath. But, Mr. Knightley, how could you possibly have heard it? for the very moment Mr. Cole told Mrs. Cole of it, she sat down and wrote to me. A Miss Hawkins——'

"'I was with Mr. Cole on business an hour and a half ago. He had just read Elton's letter as I was shown in, and handed it to me directly.'

"'Well! that is quite—I suppose there never was a piece of news more generally interesting. My dear sir, you are really too bountiful. My mother desires her very best compliments and regards, and a thousand thanks, and says you really quite oppress her.'

"'We consider our Hartfield pork,' replied Mr. Woodhouse—'indeed it certainly is, so very superior to all other pork, that Emma and I cannot have a greater pleasure than——'

"'Oh, my dear sir, as my mother says, our friends are only too good to us. If ever there were people who, without having great wealth themselves, had everything they could wish for, I am sure it is us. We may well say that "our lot is cast in a goodly heritage." Well, Mr. Knightley, and so you actually saw the letter—well——'

"'It was short—merely to announce—but cheerful, exulting, of course.' Here was a sly glance at Emma. 'He had been so fortunate as to—I forget the precise words—one has no business to remember them. The information was, as you state, that he was going to be married to a Miss Hawkins. By his style I should imagine it just settled.'"

The hand which drew Miss Bates, though it could not have drawn Lady Macbeth, could have drawn Dame Quickly or the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet."

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is a tradition that among a party of distinguished literary men who had met in a country house and were discussing the merits of different authors, it was proposed that each should write down the name of the work of fiction which had given him the greatest pleasure, and that on opening the slips of paper it was found that seven bore the name of "Mansfield Park." Of all Jane Austen's works this perhaps is the one which will best repay careful perusal. It teems with delicate touches of character and fine strokes of art.

The principal figure in "Mansfield Park" is Fanny Price. Fanny's mother is the wife of a poor lieutenant of marines, and has married "to disoblige her family." But she has a sister who "with only seven thousand pounds had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequence of a handsome house and large income." She has another sister married to Mr. Norris, who holds the family living of Mansfield. Mrs. Price's family multiplying, she is glad to make up the quarrel with her

family, and it is proposed to relieve her of one of her children. The proposal comes from Mrs. Norris, who gives herself the credit, but adroitly throws the burden on Sir Thomas. Not to the Rectory, therefore, Fanny, the selected child, is brought, but to Mansfield Park. Mansfield Park is a mansion worthy of the baronetage, with a park six miles round, a great train of domestics, a grand butler heading each evening the solemn procession with the tea urn, a bewigged coachman, and all the equipments of aristocratic state and luxury. The style of the writer seems to rise a little with the grandeur of the scene, and there is an approach to tragic dignity at the close.

To the inmates of Mansfield Park Fanny Price is introduced. Sir Thomas is a most worthy man, superior in understanding, and not only a baronet but a gentleman. He is, however, stiff, stately, and somewhat awful. There is no merriment except in his absence. He loves his children, but does not find his way to their heart. His wife is a brainless beauty, indolent and apathetic, spending her life on the sofa in doing fancy work or fondling her pug, guided in all great matters by her husband and in all little matters by her sister, the busybody Mrs. Norris, but perfectly harmless and good-natured. There are two boys, Thomas and Edmund, two girls, Maria and Julia. The poor little Fanny is at first miserable in the strange house and amidst the unwonted grandeur. Nobody means to be unkind to her, but nobody is kind. She is "disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortify

her by reflections on her size, and abash her by noticing her shyness; Miss Lee (the governess) wonders at her ignorance, and the maidservants sneer at her clothes." To complete her woes, she feels that it is naughty in her not to be happy. At last she finds a friend and champion in the younger boy Edmund, with whose destiny we see at once her destiny is linked. He begins by helping her to write to her dear sailor brother William, and soon he becomes entire master of her affections.

Time goes on. Tom Bertram grows up "with all the liberal dispositions of an eldest son who feels born only for expense and enjoyment." Maria and Julia grow up handsome, accomplished, well-bred, but without sterling qualities, showing in their characters the bad effects at once of their father's reserve and of their Aunt Norris's fondness and flattery. Edmund is the flower of the family. He is destined for orders, and in time for the family living, though the debts of his elder brother have somewhat compromised his prospects of preferment and compelled Sir Thomas to sell the next presentation to the epicurean Dr. Grant, doing thereby, as he feels, an injustice to his younger son, though it does not seem to enter his head that he is doing an injustice to the souls of the parishioners. Mr. Norris being defunct, Mrs. Norris has moved from the Rectory to the White House; but she is perpetually at the Park, to the misfortune of Fanny Price, towards whom she is always harsh and censorious, constantly reminding her of her situation and making a slave of her, while she idolizes and spoils the Misses Bertram. Edmund still treats Fanny with the same kindness; he directs her reading, trains her mind,

provides a horse for her, and teaches her to ride, and is in all things an affectionate brother to her, while his own excellence unfolds into manhood. On her part gratitude, admiration, and friendship are fast ripening into love.

The season of love and love-adventures arrives. That the mice may play for our amusement, the cat is sent away. Sir Thomas finds it necessary to go and look after his estate in Antigua. Even the good Fanny cannot help sinfully feeling that his absence is a relief.

There come to Mansfield Henry and Mary Crawford, the brother and sister of Mrs. Grant, whose guests at the Rectory they are. Henry Crawford is a brilliant man of the world with a good property, and so fascinating that though not handsome he is thought so. Mary Crawford is a siren full of grace and wit, besides playing enchantingly on the harp. But they have been brought up under the influence of their uncle, Admiral Crawford, an immoral old gentleman, and they are both of them light and unprincipled, though their superiority of intellect has preserved their moral taste.

Edmund Bertram, country-bred though his understanding is excellent, falls desperately in love with the London liveliness and glitter of Mary Crawford. He cannot help seeing her want of principle and being shocked by the levity with which she talks of serious subjects, and which is especially uncongenial to him as he is going to be a clergyman and thinks worthily of his calling. But he blinds himself to facts, dwells on Mary's amiability and good-nature, which are real, and sets down her faults to the account of a bad education.

Fanny Price undergoes the pain not only of watching

the growth of this rising passion which is going to rob her of the idol of her own heart, and the object of which, to enhance her anguish, she sees to be unworthy, but of being taken into Edmund's confidence and having her judgment, which steadily rebels, pressed into the service of his fond delusion. For Edmund, while he regards Fanny with the utmost affection as a sister, has no suspicion that she regards him otherwise than as a brother. The pages in which the martyrdom of Fanny Price's love is told are among the highest effort of the writer's art.

"'I think the man who could often quarrel with Fanny,' said Edmund, affectionately, 'must be beyond the reach of any sermons.'

"Fanny turned farther into the window; and Miss Crawford had only time to say, in a pleasant manner, 'I fancy Miss Price has been more used to deserve praise than to hear it;' when being earnestly invited by the Miss Bertrams to join in a glee, she tripped off to the instrument, leaving Edmund looking after her in an ecstasy of admiration of all her many virtues, from her obliging manners down to her light and graceful tread.

"'There goes good humour, I am sure,' said he presently. 'There goes a temper which would never give pain! How well she walks! and how readily she falls in with the inclination of others! joining them the moment she is asked. What a pity,' he added, after an instant's reflection, 'that she should have been in such hands!'

"Fanny agreed to it, and had the pleasure of seeing him continue at the window with her, in spite of the expected glee; and of having his eyes soon turned, like hers, towards the scene without, where all that was solemn, and soothing, and lovely, appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods. Fanny spoke her feelings. 'Here's harmony!' said she; 'here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe!

Here's what may tranquillize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene.'

"'I like to hear your enthusiasm, Fanny. It is a lovely night, and they are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel, in some degree, as you do; who have not, at least, been given a taste for nature in early life. They lose a great deal.'

"'*You* taught me to think and feel on the subject, cousin.'

"'I had a very apt scholar. There's Arcturus looking very bright.'

"'Yes, and the Bear. I wish I could see Cassiopeia.'

"'We must go out on the lawn for that. Should you be afraid?'

"'Not in the least. It is a great while since we have had any star-gazing.'

"'Yes; I do not know how it has happened.' The glee began. 'We will stay till this is finished, Fanny,' said he, turning his back on the window; and as it advanced, she had the mortification of seeing him advance too, moving forward by gentle degrees towards the instrument, and when it ceased, he was close by the singers, among the most urgent in requesting to hear the glee again.'

"Fanny sighed alone at the window till scolded away by Mrs. Norris's threats of catching cold."

Meantime Henry Crawford, in his profligate way, is making love to Maria and Julia Bertram at the same time, while the sisters, both in love with him, are rivals for his regard. But Maria is already engaged, through the manœuvring of Mrs. Norris, whose darling she is, to Mr. Rushworth, a neighbouring squire with twelve thousand a year but no brains. Nevertheless Henry Crawford finally gives the preference to Maria, who is the greater beauty of the two, and with her carries on a scandalous flirtation, while her betrothed "stands

dangling his bonnet and plume," and can only relieve himself by disparaging Mr. Crawford's stature.

Mary Crawford has moral and intellectual taste enough to appreciate Edmund Bertram ; she is as much in love with him as her shallow heart can be, and is apparently ready to accept him ; but her worldly ambition receives a shock when she finds that he is going to be a clergyman. Before the discovery, she had spoken to him in very disparaging terms of the profession as one which no man of spirit would enter, and when the discovery is made she cannot get over it, and labours with her siren art to dissuade her lover from a step which would close the door against all hope of public life and worldly distinction. Her prejudice is perhaps increased by the daily sight of Dr. Grant, a respectable clergyman in his way and a good preacher, but an indolent and selfish *bon vivant*, who, if he is disappointed about a green goose, quarrels with his excellent wife and sulks for a whole evening. About the small income, to do her justice, she does not seem to think so much. Edmund, however, cannot consent to change his profession, and he vainly struggles to remove her prejudice, for he is desperately in love.

The love affairs, that between Edmund Bertram and Mary Crawford and that between Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram, with the rivalry of Julia, the jealousy of Mr. Rushworth, and the martyrdom of Fanny, are carried on through a succession of scenes, Sir Thomas being still absent in Antigua, where the wishes of all the party except his wife would long detain him.

The party go to spend a day at Sotherton, Mr.

Rushworth's place, and both on the road and in the wanderings about the house, the grounds, and the "wilderness," moving incidents occur, the flirtation of Mr. Crawford with Miss Bertram especially reaching a great height. This picture of passion and jealousy is finely set off by the figure of Mrs. Norris bandying formal compliments with the dull Mrs. Rushworth, snapping at Fanny, and spunging on the housekeeper for cream cheeses and pheasants' eggs. The party at length sets out for home.

"'Well, Fanny, this has been a fine day for you, upon my word!' said Mrs. Norris, as they drove through the park. 'Nothing but pleasure from beginning to end! I am sure you ought to be very much obliged to your Aunt Bertram and me, for contriving to let you go. A pretty good day's amusement you have had!'

"Maria was just discontented enough to say directly, 'I think *you* have done pretty well yourself, ma'am. Your lap seems full of good things, and here is a basket of something between us, which has been knocking my elbow unmercifully.'

"'My dear, it is only a beautiful little heath, which that nice old gardener would make me take; but if it is in your way, I will have it in my lap directly. There, Fanny, you shall carry that parcel for me; take great care of it; do not let it fall; it is a cream cheese, just like the excellent one we had at dinner. Nothing would satisfy that good old Mrs. Whitaker, but my taking one of the cheeses. I stood out as long as I could, till the tears almost came into her eyes, and I knew it was just the sort that my sister would be delighted with. That Mrs. Whitaker is a treasure! She was quite shocked when I asked her whether wine was allowed at the second table, and she has turned away two housemaids for wearing white gowns. Take care of the cheese, Fanny. Now I can manage the other parcel and the basket very well.'

"'What else have you been spunging?' said Maria, half pleased that Sotherton should be so complimented.

"'Spunging, my dear! It is nothing but four of those beautiful

pheasants' eggs, which Mrs. Whitaker would quite force upon me; she would not take a denial. She said it must be such an amusement to me, as she understood I lived quite alone, to have a few living creatures of that sort; and so to be sure it will. I shall get the dairymaid to set them under the first spare hen, and if they come to good I can have them moved to my own house and borrow a coop; and it will be a great delight to me in my lonely hours to attend to them. And if I have good luck, your mother shall have some.'

"It was a beautiful evening, mild and still, and the drive was as pleasant as the serenity of nature could make it; but when Mrs. Norris ceased speaking, it was altogether a silent drive to those within. Their spirits were in general exhausted; and to determine whether the day had afforded most pleasure or pain, might occupy the meditations of almost all."

Can anything be more vivid than this picture of the sinking of Mrs. Norris's chatter into the general silence, while they all roll on through the still evening, the heart of each exhausted with the joy or sorrow of the day?

The next thing is that the party at Mansfield Park get up private theatricals. The idea is put into their heads by the objectionable Mr. Yates, a nobleman's younger son who has joined the party, having come from a great house where they had been getting up a play but had been prevented from performing it by the untoward death of a grandmother. Edmund, the conscience of the party, protests against a scheme which he knows and which they all more or less know that his father would disapprove, and which in the absence of the head of the house is unseemly. But his protest is unavailing. To complete his dismay the play chosen, after the usual conflict of tastes and vanities, is *Lovers' Vows*, and parts are cast for Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram so

that Crawford will have to play Miss Bertram's lover. Edmund protests with increased vehemence. But his virtue is doomed to a fall. Miss Crawford takes the part of Amelia, and Anhalt is to make love to her. But there is no one in the family party to take the part of Anhalt. She is distressed at the thought of its being taken by a stranger; her lover shares her embarrassment, the siren uses her allurements, and to prevent worse mischief Edmund persuades himself that there is nothing for it but that he should take the part of Anhalt himself. He labours hard to sophisticate his own judgment and tries to make Fanny, for whose moral instincts he has a deep respect, his accomplice in the attempt. All the spirits of evil triumph in the victory over Edmund's virtue. Fanny is horrified at this self-abasement of her idol. For herself, morally firm and steadfast, though sensitive, timorous, and lowly in her own eyes, she with gentle resolution refuses to take a part, and only with much misgiving consents to fill a vacant place by reading in the rehearsal. Henry Crawford having distinctly thrown the handkerchief to Maria by giving her the first female part and the one in which she would have him to play her lover, Julia is in dudgeon. Otherwise all goes on swimmingly. Mrs. Norris and the maids are at work on the green baize curtain, in the making of which, by her skilful management, half a crown's worth of rings are saved; and Mr. Rushworth, to whom the part suitable to his intellect is assigned, is desperately trying to learn his forty-two speeches, and is partly consoling himself under the pangs of jealousy with the prospect of appearing in a blue dress and a pink satin cloak. The

billiard-room has been fitted up as a stage, and Sir Thomas's sanctum has been turned upside down to furnish a green-room. A rehearsal is going on: the hand of Henry Crawford as *Frederick* is on the heart of Maria as *Agatha*, when Julia bursts in with the announcement that Sir Thomas has returned and is in the hall at that moment. The company disperses in dismay, Frederick, however, even after the thunderbolt has fallen, continuing to press the hand of Agatha to his heart. A scene of comic agony ensues, and it reaches the climax when Sir Thomas goes to indulge himself with a sight of his own dear room.

"When tea was soon afterwards brought in, and Sir Thomas, getting up, said that he found that he could not be any longer in the house without just looking into his own dear room, every agitation was returning. He was gone before anything had been said to prepare him for the change he must find there; and a pause of alarm followed his disappearance. Edmund was the first to speak.

"'Something must be done,' said he.

"'It is time to think of our visitors,' said Maria, still feeling her hand pressed to Henry Crawford's heart, and caring little for anything else. 'Where did you leave Miss Crawford, Fanny?'

"Fanny told of their departure, and delivered their message.

"'Then poor Yates is all alone,' cried Tom. 'I will go and fetch him. He will be no bad assistant when it all comes out.'

"To the theatre he went, and reached it just in time to witness the first meeting of his father and his friend. Sir Thomas had been a good deal surprised to find candles burning in his room; and on casting his eye round it, to see other symptoms of recent habitation and a general air of confusion in the furniture. The removal of the book-case from the billiard-room door struck him especially, but he had scarcely more than time to feel astonished at all this, before there were sounds from the billiard-room to astonish them still further. Some one was talking there in a very loud accent; he did

not know the voice—more than talking—almost hallooing. He stepped to the door, rejoicing at that moment in having the means of immediate communication, and, opening it, found himself on the stage of a theatre, and opposed to a ranting young man, who appeared likely to knock him down backwards. At the very moment of Yates perceiving Sir Thomas, and giving perhaps the very best start he had ever given in the whole course of his rehearsals, Tom Bertram entered at the other end of the room; and never had he found greater difficulty in keeping his countenance. His father's looks of solemnity and amazement on this, his first appearance on any stage, and the gradual metamorphosis of the impassioned Baron Wildenheim into the well-bred and easy Mr. Yates, making his bow and apology to Sir Thomas Bertram, was such an exhibition, such a piece of true acting, as he would not have lost upon any account. It would be the last—in all probability—the last scene on that stage; but he was sure there could not be a finer. The house would close with the greatest eclat."

After this Henry Crawford takes flight, leaving Maria Bertram in the lurch. Her father, who sees that Mr. Rushworth is a man whom she cannot and does not love, offers to get her released from the engagement. But pride and resentment forbid her to let Henry Crawford think that she renounces a grand establishment for the sake of one who has played with her and deserted her. Nor can she endure the renewed restraint of her father's presence. She assures Sir Thomas that she does not wish to break off her engagement, and she is married with due pomp and elegance to Mr. Rushworth, the service being impressively read by Dr. Grant. "In all the important preparations of the mind she was complete; being prepared for matrimony by a hatred of home, restraint, and tranquillity; by the misery of disappointed affection, and contempt of the man she was to

marry. The rest might wait. The preparations of new carriages and furniture might wait for London and spring, when her own taste could have fairer play." There is not a severer touch in Jane Austen's works. After the wedding the pair go to Brighton, taking Julia with them.

Fanny Price is now the only young lady at Mansfield Park, and is brought from the background into the foreground. Sir Thomas is struck with the improvement in her appearance. She has been prettily called by Miss Sarah Tytler a white violet, and the white violet has now attained the fulness of its beauty and fragrance. Her dear sailor brother having come to visit her, a ball is given for her and him at Mansfield, to the surprise and disgust of Mrs. Norris, whose malice grudges her any pleasure or promotion.

Miss Crawford has remained at Mansfield, and Henry Crawford has unexpectedly joined her. He is assiduous in cultivating his intimacy with the family at the Park. At last Sir Thomas cannot avoid perceiving "in a grand and careless way," that Mr. Crawford is somewhat distinguishing his niece. After a dinner-party at the parsonage he "begins to think that any one in the habit of such idle observations *would have thought* that Mr. Crawford was the admirer of Fanny Price." He divines rightly. Henry Crawford, who set out, as he averred to his light-minded sister, with the intention only of breaking a heart for his amusement, has fallen seriously and deeply in love with Fanny Price. Not only do the beauty, the freshness and tenderness of the white violet attract him, but loose as was his own character, he has

the sense, and not only the sense, but a sufficient remnant of moral salt in his nature to value character in a wife. His sister, in whom there is the same mixture of good with bad qualities which there is in him, notwithstanding Fanny's want of fortune and position, heartily approves and backs his suit. She conjures into the hands of Fanny before the ball a necklace which is really her brother's gift. The necklace is intended to support a cross brought as a present to Fanny by her brother William: but it does not fit the cross; a plain gold chain given by Edmund does. By way of opening a sure road to Fanny's heart, Henry Crawford obtains through his uncle, the immoral old admiral, her brother William's promotion in the navy, and himself brings her the joyful news. He declares his love to Fanny, who is all astonishment and confusion. She refuses him on the spot. Still he perseveres, and ardently presses his suit, pride conspiring with love to make him impatient of rejection. His suit is backed by Sir Thomas, who has a solemn interview with Fanny, in which he makes her wretched by intimating that to refuse so perfect a gentleman, who is also master of Everingham and four thousand a year, would be an act on her part not only of extreme folly but of undutifulness. Little knowing what has happened, or what is to come, he says that he would gladly have given Crawford either of his own daughters. To complete Fanny's misery, Edmund also urges her to look favourably on the offer of the man whose sister he still hopes to make his wife, showing thereby more plainly than ever that her own love of himself is hopeless. Crawford puts forth all his powers of charming,

and he has made himself so agreeable, and his real merits are such that, convinced as Fanny has been by many indications that his character is corrupt, we are led to surmise that he might have prevailed in the end had not Fanny's heart been guarded by the other attachment, which, though hopeless, is still strong. As it is she steadily rejects him, and he at last takes his departure, still, however, refusing to despair, and encouraged by Sir Thomas in the belief that Fanny will presently change her mind. He is evidently intended to be represented as having depth of character of a certain kind, and power of appreciating moral as well as physical beauty.

Edmund Bertram has taken the step on the consequences of which depends, as he thinks, the happiness of his life. He has been ordained, a ceremony which appears to have been regarded in those days with much less awe than it is now, inasmuch as he, who would have been scrupulous, if any one would, had danced at a ball a few days before. Will Mary Crawford now discard him, or will she quell her ambition, overcome her prejudices, and remain true to the man whom it is evident that, woman of the world and wanting in principle as she is, she has the grace sincerely to love? She has not made up her mind. Every day Fanny is expecting to hear that Edmund has been accepted by Mary, and that the doom of her own heart is sealed. But still she does not hear it. Edmund's enthralment, however, is still complete. Mary Crawford cannot help showing, and he cannot help seeing, what is bad in her; but he sets it all down to education and circumstance.

Her enchantments prevail: he makes up his mind that he will be miserable without her, and fervently presses his suit, still pouring his confidences into the sisterly bosom, as he takes it to be, of Fanny, and filling that bosom with agony thereby.

Sir Thomas Bertram condescends to a stratagem. He ordains that Fanny shall pay a visit to her family, whom she has not seen all these years, and who are living at Portsmouth. His ostensible reason is that she owes this duty to affection. His real reason is that after spending a few weeks in the house of a poor Lieutenant of Marines and his wife, she will know what poverty is, and see how great a mistake she would be making if she refused the owner of Everingham. She accordingly goes down to Portsmouth with her sailor brother William, who was staying at Mansfield. In one respect Sir Thomas's anticipations are thoroughly fulfilled. Fanny does see what poverty is. The "trollopy" servant-girl by whom she is received at the door is an index to the character of the establishment. The home which she has been longing to see again is the abode of noise, dirt, disorder, and impropriety. The father for whose embrace she yearned is coarse, vulgar, given to drinking spirits and to swearing. He receives his daughter almost with indifference. Her mother is slatternly, a bad manager, and always struggling with the sordid cares and difficulties which her want of control over her household and household affairs creates. Fanny's brothers and sisters are an ill-bred, untrained, quarrelsome crew, and their din which resounds through the little house is insufferable. The

house is comfortless as well as small, and the cookery of Rebecca is such that Sir Thomas's cure is in some danger of killing the patient. The only redeeming part of the picture is the character of Susan Price, in whom a better nature than that of her brothers and sisters shows itself, and who is reclaimed and civilized by Fanny. The heart of Fanny does indeed turn away from a home of poverty to one of wealth, order, elegance and luxury. But it yearns for Mansfield Park and not for Everingham.

At Portsmouth she receives a visit from Henry Crawford, whose perseverance, considering that Fanny's attractions are largely moral, we cannot but admire. He once more exerts his powers of fascination, and he has a special opportunity of showing his good breeding and gentlemanly tact by a behaviour to the Price family which relieves Fanny from her natural fears of disgrace and shame: for, though she wishes an end to be put to Crawford's unwelcome suit, she does not wish an end to be put to it by the vulgarity of her relations. The visit is without result. While Henry Crawford is talking of Everingham, Fanny listens with indifference: she is all attention when he talks of Mansfield. Still it seems that he would have a chance if Edmund married Mary Crawford.

But Edmund does not marry Mary Crawford. She has now got back to London, and is again under the influence of her fashionable and aristocratic set. In the vortex of fast society her worldly ambition gets the upper hand of the love which had been bred in Mansfield Parsonage. In a letter to Fanny, Edmund

says that after seeing Mary in London he has returned to Mansfield in a less assured state than when he left it. Still, he has not received a final answer, and if Mary could only be detached from Lady Stornoway, Mrs. Fraser, and the rest of the fast set, there would be hope. Edmund cannot give Mary up: "she is the only woman in the world of whom he would ever think as a wife." He can the less bear the thought of renouncing her because he would at the same time be renouncing the society of the others who were the most dear to him, since the loss of Mary would, as he fancies, be the loss of Henry Crawford and of Fanny.

Edmund's elder brother, the sporting and dissipated Tom, falls dangerously ill. Mary Crawford writes to Fanny to inquire whether he is likely to die, showing plainly that if he does, and if Edmund comes in for the title and the estate, this will make all the difference in the state of her affections. After this we give up Mary for ever.

Now comes a crash which brings with it the catastrophe. In London Henry Crawford again meets Maria Bertram, now Mrs. Rushworth, who, with a husband she cannot love and of whom she cannot help being ashamed, is unhappy amidst her grandeur. She falls into the arms of her old lover, who has not principle enough to resist the temptation. They run away together. At the same time Julia sympathetically elopes with the objectionable Mr. Yates. Fanny is recalled to Mansfield as the only angel of comfort in a house overwhelmed with misery and shame. The Rushworths are divorced, and as Sir Thomas refuses

to receive Maria at Mansfield, Mrs. Norris, whose handiwork as a matchmaker has thus come to hideous ruin, leaves Mansfield and goes to spend in retirement with her Maria the rest of their clouded lives.

Since the affair of Crawford and Mrs. Rushworth, Edmund has seen Mary Crawford, and she has spoken of the matter in a tone of such revolting levity and immorality, thinking only of the folly, not of the guilt, and proposing a solution almost as bad as the crime itself, that he has not been able any longer to blind himself to her real character, and has at once cast her off for ever. There has been a stormy scene between them, in which not only the heartlessness but the insolence of the woman of the world has shown itself, though as Edmund was leaving the room her love once more struggled for the mastery, and she showed an inclination to call him back, to which he did not respond.

Edmund is now thrown back on the sisterly affection of Fanny. As a wife, he still thinks that no other woman but Mary Crawford will do for him. In time, and after much experience of Fanny as a comforter, he finds that a woman of another sort will do. They are married. Dr. Grant is promoted to a stall at Westminster, where he dies of apoplexy brought on by a course of institutionary dinners. Edmund and Fanny are installed in Mansfield Parsonage. Sir Thomas is consoled in his old age, and Susan Price takes Fanny's place with Lady Bertram.

Among the subordinate characters, the most notable is that of Mrs. Norris. Short of criminality, nothing

can be more odious; nor has Jane Austen painted anything which we should say was more worthy of hatred. Mrs. Norris is harsh, ill-natured, mean, and artful. Her mind is thoroughly low. She affects benevolence, but takes care that her good works shall be done at the cost of others. Her behaviour to poor Fanny is execrable, and one wonders that Sir Thomas can overlook it, or fail "in his solemn musings" to see what she is, notwithstanding all her professions of devotion to his interest. She cackles over her grand triumph in preventing a poor boy who has come on an errand from getting his dinner in the servants' hall. She is thievish withal: after the catastrophe of the theatricals she makes off with the green baize curtain, and after the wedding she filches the supernumerary jellies. Feeling that she ought to send a present to the nephews and nieces whom she has not seen for a number of years, she balances between two old prayer-books, and at last cannot make up her mind to part with either. There is nothing in her not thoroughly selfish except her doting fondness for her two Bertram nieces, which is itself closely connected with her own vanity, and which leads them both to ruin. Yet what character is dearer to us than Mrs. Norris? What would even "Mansfield Park" be without her? It is to the bad characters in novels and plays that we are indebted after all for the excitement and the fun.

Between the character of Mrs. Norris and that of her sister Lady Bertram, there is perhaps a rather unnatural gap. Nor are the indolence, apathy, and mental vacancy

of Lady Bertram kept quite within the bounds of credulity even when all allowance is made for a life spent in the lap of ease and luxury. With regard to these comic characters, however, we must repeat that the features of the comic mask, to produce an effect, must be exaggerated. Lady Bertram's passive faultlessness in all the relations of life is skilfully sustained. It appears in her reception of her husband after his return from the West Indies.

"By not one of the circle was he listened to with such unbroken, unalloyed enjoyment as by his wife, who was really extremely happy to see him, and whose feelings were so warmed by his sudden arrival, as to place her nearer agitation than she had been for the last twenty years. She had been *almost* fluttered for a few minutes, and still remained so sensibly animated as to put away her work, move pug from her side, and give all her attention and all the rest of her sofa to her husband. She had no anxieties for anybody to cloud *her* pleasure: her own time had been irreproachably spent during his absence: she had done a great deal of carpet work, and made many yards of fringe; and she would have answered as freely for the good conduct and useful pursuits of all the young people as for her own. It was so agreeable to her to see him again, and hear him talk, to have her ear amused and her whole comprehension filled by his narratives, that she began particularly to feel how dreadfully she must have missed him, and how impossible it would have been for her to bear a lengthened absence."

Lady Bertram's letter to Fanny upon the dangerous illness of Tom Bertram is a counterpart as a self-revelation to the letters of Mr. Collins in "Pride and Prejudice."

"'This distressing intelligence, as you may suppose,' observed her ladyship, after giving the substance of it, 'has agitated us exceedingly, and we cannot prevent ourselves from being greatly

alarmed and apprehensive for the poor invalid, whose state Sir Thomas fears may be very critical; and Edmund kindly proposes attending his brother immediately, but I am happy to add that Sir Thomas will not leave me on this distressing occasion, as it would be too trying for me. We shall greatly miss Edmund in our small circle, but I trust and hope he will find the poor invalid in a less alarming state than might be apprehended, and that he will be able to bring him to Mansfield shortly, which Sir Thomas proposes should be done, and thinks best on every account, and I flatter myself the poor sufferer will soon be able to bear the removal without material inconvenience or injury. As I have little doubt of your feeling for us, my dear Fanny, under these distressing circumstances, I will write again very soon.'"

We measure the extent of the disasters which have fallen upon the family by their effect in overcoming the apathy of Lady Bertram. Fanny (on her return from Portsmouth to Mansfield) had scarcely passed the solemn-looking servants when Lady Bertram came from the drawing-room to meet her: came with no indolent step, and falling on her neck, said, "Dear Fanny, now I shall be comfortable."

A fine stroke of art is the character of the third sister, Mrs. Price. She resembles by nature more the easy and indolent Lady Bertram than the bustling and managing Mrs. Norris. Her imprudent marriage has forced her into the management of a poor and troublesome household, for which she is quite unfit. "Her days were spent in a kind of slow bustle; always busy without getting on; always behindhand, and lamenting it without altering her ways; wishing to be an economist without contrivance or regularity; dissatisfied with her servants without skill to make them better, and whether helping or reprimanding or indulging them, without any

power of engaging their respect." "She might have made just as good a woman of consequence as Lady Bertram, but Mrs. Norris would have been a more respectable mother of more children on a small income." A bit of justice, by the way, is here done even to Mrs. Norris, who had energy and management, if she had nothing else. It is a fine touch in the description of Mrs. Price that "her voice resembled the soft monotony of Lady Bertram's, only worn into fretfulness."

There is nothing in Zola more realistic, if that somewhat disagreeable word must be used, than the description of the Price household:

"She (Fanny) was deep in other musing. The remembrance of her first evening in that room, of her father and his newspaper, came across her. No candle was *now* wanted. The sun was yet an hour and a half above the horizon. She felt that she had, indeed, been three months there; and the sun's rays falling strongly into the parlour, instead of cheering, made her still more melancholy, for sunshine appeared to her a totally different thing in a town and in the country. Here, its power was only a glare; a stifling, sickly glare, serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept. There was neither health nor gaiety in sunshine in a town. She sat in a blaze of oppressive heat, in a cloud of moving dust, and her eyes could only wander from the walls, marked by her father's head, to the table cut and notched by her brothers, where stood the tea-board, never thoroughly cleaned, the cups and saucers wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy than even Rebecca's hands had first produced it. Her father read his newspaper, and her mother lamented over the ragged carpet as usual, while the tea was in preparation, and wished Rebecca would mend it."

This series of scenes, however, though it vies with

Zola in realism, has nothing of Zola's repulsiveness, and it is relieved by a touch of pathos:

"Fanny was silent; but not from being convinced that there might not be a remedy found for some of these evils. As she now sat looking at Betsey, she could not but think particularly of another sister, a very pretty little girl, whom she had left there not much younger when she went into Northamptonshire, who had died a few years afterwards. There had been something remarkably amiable about her. Fanny in those early days had preferred her to Susan; and when the news of her death had at last reached Mansfield, had for a short time been quite afflicted. The sight of Betsey brought the image of little Mary back again, but she would not have pained her mother by alluding to her for the world. While considering her with these ideas, Betsey, at a small distance, was holding out something to catch her eyes, meaning to screen it at the same time from Susan's.

"'What have you got there, my love?' said Fanny, 'come and show it to me.'

"It was a silver knife. Up jumped Susan, claiming it as her own, and trying to get it away; but the child ran to her mother's protection, and Susan could only reproach, which she did very warmly, and evidently hoping to interest Fanny on her side. 'It was very hard that she was not to have her *own* knife; it was her own knife; little sister Mary had left it to her upon her death-bed, and she ought to have had it to keep herself long ago. But mamma kept it from her, and was always letting Betsey get hold of it; and the end of it would be that Betsey would spoil it, and get it for her own, though mamma had promised her that Betsey should not have it in her own hands.'

"Fanny was quite shocked. Every feeling of duty, honour, and tenderness, was wounded by her sister's speech and her mother's reply.

"'Now, Susan,' cried Mrs. Price, in a complaining voice, 'now, how can you be so cross? You are always quarrelling about that knife. I wish you would not be so quarrelsome. Poor little Betsey; how cross Susan is to you! But you should not have taken it out, my dear, when I sent you to the drawer. You know I told

you not to touch it, because Susan is so cross about it. I must hide it another time, Betsey. Poor Mary little thought it would be such a bone of contention when she gave it me to keep, only two hours before she died. Poor little soul! she could but just speak to be heard, and she said so prettily, "Let sister Susan have my knife, mamma, when I am dead and buried." Poor little dear! she was so fond of it, Fanny, that she would have it lie by her in bed, all through her illness. It was the gift of her good godmother, old Mrs. Admiral Maxwell, only six weeks before she was taken for death. Poor little sweet creature! Well, she was taken away from evil to come. My own Betsey (fondling her), *you* have not the luck of such a good godmother. Aunt Norris lives too far off to think of such little people as you.'"

It has been said that in the character of Lieutenant Price, and in that of Admiral Crawford, Jane Austen, devoted as she was to the navy, has shown her impartiality by letting us see the bad side of the profession. Admiral Crawford, however, though he is a power of evil in the distance, does not come upon the scene, and his keeping a mistress has nothing to do with his profession. Lieutenant Price is not a sailor, but a marine. However, it will be observed that Lieutenant Price, though sadly fallen in moral and mental as well as in material estate, still has the gentleman in him, and can show that he has when the remnant of his self-respect is roused by contact with Henry Crawford.

That Jane Austen introduced real persons of her acquaintance into her novels and made game of them, we may be sure is a baseless surmise. Her comic characters are, like those of Molière, thoroughly generic, with only enough of individual feature to constitute personality. Much less can we suppose her capable of that vilest and most cowardly of all kinds of libelling

which consists in traducing living and recognizable persons under fictitious names. But there is nothing to hinder our believing that those whom she loved appear in her pages. Her sister Cassandra is certainly there, if not as a distinct portrait, as a general model of tenderness combined with good sense and of sisterly affection. Nor can we doubt that, in "Mansfield Park," William, Fanny's sailor brother, represents one of the sailor brothers of Jane Austen. A particular incident marks the connection. William brings Fanny a cross as a present. In one of her letters Jane Austen says, "Charles has received £30 for his share of the privateer, and expects £10 more; but of what avail is it to take prizes if he lays out the produce in presents to his sisters? He has been buying gold chains and topaz crosses for us. He must be well scolded." A fine picture of the noble profession, with its frankness, its devotion to duty, its cheerfulness under perils and hardships, the character of William is:

"William was often called on by his uncle to be the talker. His recitals were amusing in themselves to Sir Thomas, but the chief object in seeking them was to understand the reciter, to know the young man by his histories; and he listened to his clear, simple, spirited details with full satisfaction, seeing in them the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness, everything that could deserve or promise well. Young as he was, William had already seen a great deal. He had been in the Mediterranean; in the West Indies; in the Mediterranean again; had been often taken on shore by the favour of his captain, and in the course of seven years had known every variety of danger which sea and war together could offer. With such means in his power he had a right to be listened to; and though Mrs. Norris could fidget about the room, and disturb everybody in

quest of two needlefuls of thread or a second-hand shirt button, in the midst of her nephew's account of a shipwreck or an engagement, everybody else was attentive ; and even Lady Bertram could not hear of such horrors unmoved, or without sometimes lifting her eyes from her work to say, 'Dear me! how disagreeable! I wonder anybody can ever go to sea.'

"To Henry Crawford they gave a different feeling. He longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much. His heart was warmed, his fancy fired, and he felt the highest respect for a lad who, before he was twenty, had gone through such bodily hardships, and given such proofs of mind. The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast ; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was!"

No more exquisite tribute to the boy's heroic calling could be imagined than the self-reproach with which this brilliant and idolized man of the world listens to William's artless narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

"PERSUASION" was the last work of Miss Austen. When it was written the hand of death was upon her, and when the last touch was put to it she was very near her end. We can therefore hardly help applying in some measure to herself what she says of Lady Elliot, that "she had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children to attach her to life and make it no matter of indifference to her when she was called on to quit them." That she would feel the value of life, and yet quit it with resignation, is what we should expect of a character like Jane Austen. There is also a passage on the melancholy charms of autumn which reminds us the writer's leaf was falling into the sere, though it is followed and relieved by an allusion to the farmer ploughing in hope of the spring. Perhaps there is a shade of pensiveness over the whole novel, and in parts an increased tenderness of sentiment such as comes with the evening hour. "Persuasion" has had passionate admirers in two persons not unqualified to judge—Miss Martineau and Miss Mitford. Though as a whole not so well constructed as others of Jane Austen's novels, it may be said to contain the finest touches of her art. Its

principal character, the tender, sensitive, and suffering Anne Elliot, is also perhaps the most interesting of Jane Austen's women, setting aside the totally different charm of the blooming and joyous Emma. The title denotes the gentle influences which persuade an injured and resentful lover after the lapse of years to return to his early love. Anne Elliot is the second daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch, a baronet absurdly proud of his title and inflated with a ridiculous sense of his own consequence. Sir Walter is a widower. The eldest daughter, Elizabeth, is the beauty and her father's pride; Mary is married to Charles Musgrove, heir to a large estate; and Anne, in spite or rather because of her refinement of mind and sweet gentleness of character, is the Cinderella of the family. When the baronet and Elizabeth go to town for the season, Anne is left at home. A few years before she had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early, as much from sadness as from lapse of years, and "as even when it was at its height her father had found little to admire in mild dark eyes and delicate features, which had nothing in common with his own, he could think nothing of her when she was faded and thin, and moreover could no longer be expected to add by marriage to the honours of his family tree." She is, however, appreciated by Lady Russell, the great friend of her mother and counsellor of the family, who lives near Kellynch. Seven years before, her troth had been plighted to Captain Wentworth, of the Navy; but she had rather weakly allowed the match to be broken off, yielding chiefly to the argument that it would be injurious to Captain Wentworth, who was then

just entering on his profession and had his future to make. Lady Russell, wise and good, but not infallible, had the principal hand in the business. Anne has, however, kept the image of Captain Wentworth in her heart, has loved no one else, has rejected Charles Musgrove, whom her sister afterwards married, and feels at twenty-seven that she was ill-advised at nineteen. Captain Wentworth in the meantime has risen in his profession, has made money by captures in the war, and is now anxious to marry. Anne, whose weakness he resents, he has cast out of his heart, only retaining her image as that of the sort of woman whom he desires for a wife. Sir Walter Elliot, in trying to keep up his state as a baronet, gets into debt, and as he finds it impossible to retrench on the scene of his grandeur, lets Kellynch Hall, which is taken by Admiral Croft, whose wife is the sister of Captain Wentworth. "A few months more, and *he*, perhaps, may be walking here."

Sir Walter goes off to Bath, taking with him his eldest daughter and a Mrs. Clay, a widow, the daughter of his solicitor, a sinister personage who, though she has freckles, is fascinating as well as designing. The despised and neglected Anne is for the present left behind, to pass her time first at Uppercross, where her sister Mary and her brother-in-law, Charles Musgrove, inhabit the cottage, and old Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove with their two daughters, Henrietta and Louisa, inhabit the mansion, and afterwards at the house of Lady Russell. Captain Wentworth of course appears upon the scene: he comes to stay with the Crofts at Kellynch Hall, and Anne's heart at once tells her that he is all that he ever

was to her. But the man, passing an active and adventurous life at sea, has had a good deal more to efface his impressions. He meets his former love with cold politeness, and Anne soon hears that he has said of her that she was so changed in looks that he would not have known her. She, alas! cannot say the same about him, and here again the man has the advantage. Their intercourse continues, and in the description of its incidents, and of the feelings of Anne, Jane Austen's highest art is exerted. Captain Wentworth avows himself anxious to marry. Henrietta and Lousia Musgrove, both of them charming, though not like Anne Elliot, are ready to fall into his arms. He seems at first to prefer Henrietta; but at last Anne, looking on with throbbing heart, is convinced that he has fixed upon Louisa. A party of pleasure is made to Lyme, where they meet the interesting Captain Benwick, a naval officer who is in melancholy retirement, having lost his betrothed. There also they fall in by accident with Mr. William Elliot, a gentleman who has hitherto appeared in the background as the heir-presumptive to Sir Walter's baronetcy, but on bad terms with Sir Walter and his family, being loaded with the triple guilt of failing to marry Elizabeth, who was destined for him, marrying another woman, wealthy but of low family, and speaking contemptuously of the title and its wearer. He has recently lost his objectionable wife. Mr. William Elliot does not recognize Anne and her party, nor do they, till he is gone, find out who he is; but he is evidently struck with Anne, and gazes at her with an earnest admiration, of which she could not be insensible. "She was looking remarkably

well; her very regular, very pretty features having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which showed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance—a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, 'That man is struck with you—and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again.'" For the present, however, Captain Wentworth's heart appears to be carried strongly in another direction. Louisa Musgrove, while he is jumping her down some steps, falls, gives herself a serious blow on the head, is carried off senseless, and lies long between life and death. In the scenes which ensue, Anne shows her superiority of sense and self-possession. Wentworth's manner, however, on the afflicting occasion is that of a devoted lover, and Anne, when she goes off with Lady Russell to join her father and sister at Bath, regards him as lost to her and affianced to another, so that there is nothing left for her but perpetual widowhood of the heart. At Bath, where Sir Walter and Elizabeth, with the designing Mrs. Clay, are established in sufficient dignity in Camden Place, Mr. William Elliot again appears, and soon begins to lay close siege to Anne. He is apparently a most eligible gentleman, socially accomplished and with much charm of manner. He is also wealthy, and the heir to the baronetcy, and to Kellynch. He might succeed if the fort were not held against him by another, though now hopeless, attachment.

Suddenly, in the postscript of a letter from Mary, comes the surprising announcement that not Captain Wentworth, but Captain Benwick is engaged to Louisa Musgrove, over whom he has been hanging in her protracted struggle for life at Lyme. It is a curious turn of affairs, especially as Captain Benwick's movements had for a moment created a false impression that he had fixed his eyes on Anne herself. As "there was fine naval fervour to begin with," Anne sees no reason why the pair should not be happy, while the vista of happiness which had seemed finally closed, opens again to her. Captain Wentworth comes to Bath, and the reason of his coming presently appears, though the suspense is still kept up and the gradual manifestation of returning love is managed with much art. After a certain interview with him, "Anne said nothing, thought nothing of the brilliancy of the room. Her happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks glowed; but she knew nothing about it. She was thinking only of the last half-hour, and as they passed to their seats her mind took a hasty range over it. His choice of subjects, his expressions, and still more his manner and his look, had been such as she could see in only one light. His opinion of Louisa Musgrove's inferiority, an opinion which he had seemed solicitous to give, his wonder at Captain Benwick, his feelings as to a first, strong attachment—sentences begun which he could not finish, his half-averted eyes and more than half-expressive glance—all, all declared that he had a heart returning to her at last; that anger, resentment, avoidance were no more; and that they were succeeded not merely by friendship

and regard, but by the tenderness of the past—yes, some share of the tenderness of the past. She could not contemplate the change as implying less. He must love her." Before long, matters have reached such a point, that "prettier musings of high-wrought love and eternal constancy could never have passed along the streets of Bath than Anne was sporting with from Camden Place to Westgate Buildings. It was almost enough to spread purification and perfume all the way." Mr. William Elliot is still there, but Anne falls in with a Mrs. Smith, a widow to whose husband Mr. Elliot had behaved badly, learns from her his history, and is assured that he is "a man without heart or conscience, a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself; who, for his own interest and ease, would be guilty of any cruelty or any treachery that could be perpetrated without risk of his general character." His object, it seems, is partly to countermine the projects of Mrs. Clay, who is still staying at Sir Walter Elliot's, and if she could induce the Baronet to marry her, might cut the heir-presumptive out of the title and estate. This puts him out of the field. Still Captain Wentworth's declaration hangs fire. It comes, at last, in the form of a letter declaring that he loves Anne more than when she almost broke his heart eight years before. At Lyme, he says, he had received more than one lesson. Mr. Elliot's passing admiration had roused him, and Anne's conduct on the occasion of Louisa's accident had fixed her superiority in his mind. He is of course accepted with rapture. The Baronet, considering Wentworth's twenty-five thousand pounds and his name, thinks him good

enough for Anne, and is willing to insert his name in the Baronetage as that of her husband. Mr. William Elliot and Mrs. Clay go off to the places appointed for them, and "Persuasion" has done its work.

Of the minor characters the most amusing is Sir Walter Elliot, with his ridiculous family pride and self-importance, and the meanness of soul by which they are naturally accompanied. The scene is very good in which, with the agony of a monarch abdicating his throne, he consents to let Kellynch Hall, treating his tenant as a person who is receiving an immense favour, and who will receive a vast accession of consequence at his hands. He is comforted by the thought that the Hall is let to an Admiral, not to a Mr.; because a Mr. requires explanation, whereas an Admiral bespeaks his own consequence and at the same time can never make a Baronet look small. He drives off "prepared with condescending bows for all the afflicted tenantry and cottagers who might have had a hint to show themselves." The picture of his social life at Bath, in reduced grandeur but with unreduced pretensions, is very good, and nothing can be more natural than the manner in which he combines with airs of supreme insolence towards all whom he thinks below him in rank, servile worship of those who are above him, such as Lady Dalrymple and her daughter. His personal vanity is as great as his family pride. Here is a scene in which it is played off:

"Mr. Elliot, and his friends in Marlborough Buildings, were talked of the whole evening. 'Colonel Wallis had been so impatient to be introduced to them; and Mr. Elliot so anxious that he should;' and there was a Mrs. Wallis, at present known only to them by

description, as she was in daily expectation of her confinement; but Mr. Elliot spoke of her as 'a most charming woman, quite worthy of being known in Camden Place,' and as soon as she recovered they were to be acquainted. Sir Walter thought much of Mrs. Wallis; she was said to be an excessively pretty woman, beautiful. 'He longed to see her. He hoped she might make some amends for the many very plain faces he was continually passing in the streets. The worst of Bath was the number of its plain women. He did not mean to say that there were no pretty women, but the number of the plain was out of all proportion. He had frequently observed, as he walked, that one handsome face would be followed by thirty, or five-and-thirty frights; and once, as he had stood in a shop in Bond Street, he had counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another, without there being a tolerable face among them. It had been a frosty morning, to be sure, a sharp frost, which hardly one woman in a thousand could stand the test of. But still, there certainly were a dreadful multitude of ugly women in Bath; and as for the men! they were infinitely worse. Such scarecrows as the streets were full of! It was evident how little the women were used to the sight of anything tolerable, by the effect which a man of decent appearance produced. He had never walked anywhere arm-in-arm with Colonel Wallis (who was a fine military figure, though sandy-haired) without observing that every woman's eye was upon him; every woman's eye was sure to be upon Colonel Wallis.' Modest Sir Walter! He was not allowed to escape, however. His daughter and Mrs. Clay united in hinting that Colonel Wallis's companion might have as good a figure as Colonel Wallis, and certainly was not sandy-haired."

Like Mr. Woodhouse's valetudinarianism, Sir Walter Elliot's conceit is a little overdrawn. He is made to say that he had given somebody a passport to society, by being seen with him once in the House of Commons and twice at Tattersall's. If he had belonged either to the House of Commons or to Tattersall's, he would have had some of his conceit and insolence knocked out of him. This a woman did not know.

Anne's sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, are foils to Anne. Elizabeth's coldness of heart and selfishness are touched off in her response to her father's anxious inquiry about the possibility of retrenchment. "To do her justice, she had, in the first ardour of female alarm, set seriously to think what could be done, and had finally proposed these two branches of economy—to cut off some unnecessary charities, and to refrain from new furnishing the drawing-room; to which expedients she afterwards added the happy thought of their taking no present down (from London) to Anne, as had been their usual yearly custom." Mary's querulous and hypocritical self-love is well painted in the scene in which she finds pretexts for deserting her sick child to go to a dinner-party, and leaving her sister to supply her place. She manages to find in her maternal sensibilities an excuse for her abandonment of a mother's duty. But her self-love, her querulousness, and the silly inconsistency of her judgments of people, always shifting with trivial impressions of the hour, are together depicted in her letter to her sister, which, as a stroke of art in the epistolary revelation of character, forms a counterpart of Lady Bertram's letter to Fanny in "Mansfield Park."

"*February* 1——.

"My dear Anne,—I make no apology for my silence, because I know how little people think of letters in such a place as Bath. You must be a great deal too happy to care for Uppercross, which, as you well know, affords little to write about. We have had a very dull Christmas; Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove have not had one dinner-party all the holidays. I do not reckon the Hayters as anybody. The holidays, however, are over at last: I believe no children ever had such long ones. I am sure I had not. The house was cleared

yesterday, except of the little Harvilles; but you will be surprised to hear that they have never gone home. Mrs. Harville must be an odd mother to part with them so long. I do not understand it. They are not at all nice children, in my opinion; but Mrs. Musgrove seems to like them quite as well, if not better, than her grandchildren. What dreadful weather we have had! It may not be felt in Bath, with your nice pavements; but in the country it is of some consequence. I have not had a creature call on me since the second week in January, except Charles Hayter, who has been calling much oftener than was welcome. Between ourselves, I think it a great pity Henrietta did not remain at Lyme as long as Louisa; it would have kept her a little out of his way. The carriage is gone to-day, to bring Louisa and the Harvilles to-morrow. We are not asked to dine with them, however, till the day after, Mrs. Musgrove is so afraid of her being fatigued by the journey, which is not very likely, considering the care that will be taken of her; and it would be much more convenient to me to dine there to-morrow. I am glad you find Mr. Elliot so agreeable, and wish I could be acquainted with him too; but I have my usual luck: I am always out of the way when anything desirable is going on; always the last of my family to be noticed. What an immense time Mrs. Clay has been staying with Elizabeth! Does she never mean to go away? But, perhaps, if she were to leave the room vacant, we might not be invited. Let me know what you think of this. I do not expect my children to be asked, you know. I can leave them at the Great House very well, for a month or six weeks. I have this moment heard that the Crofts are going to Bath almost immediately: they think the Admiral gouty. Charles heard it quite by chance: they have not had the civility to give me any notice, or offer to take anything. I do not think they improve at all as neighbours. We see nothing of them, and this is really an instance of gross inattention. Charles joins me in love, and everything proper.

"Yours affectionately,

"MARY M——.

"I am sorry to say that I am very far from well; and Jemima has just told me that the butcher says there is a bad sore-throat very much about. I dare say I shall catch it; and my sore-throats, you know, are always worse than anybody's."

So ended the first part, which had been afterwards put into an envelope, containing nearly as much more.

"I kept my letter open, that I might send you word how Louisa bore her journey, and now I am extremely glad I did, having a great deal to add. In the first place, I had a note from Mrs. Croft yesterday, offering to convey anything to you; a very kind, friendly note indeed, addressed to me, just as it ought; I shall therefore be able to make my letter as long as I like. The Admiral does not seem very ill, and I sincerely hope Bath will do him all the good he wants. I shall be truly glad to have them back again. Our neighbourhood cannot spare such a pleasant family. But now for Louisa. I have something to communicate that will astonish you not a little. She and the Harvilles came on Tuesday very safely, and in the evening we went to ask her how she did, when we were rather surprised not to find Captain Benwick of the party, for he had been invited as well as the Harvilles; and what do you think was the reason? Neither more nor less than his being in love with Louisa, and not choosing to venture to Uppercross till he had had an answer from Mr. Musgrove; for it was all settled between him and her before she came away, and he had written to her father by Captain Harville. True, upon my honour! Are you not astonished? I shall be surprised at least if you ever received a hint of it, for I never did. Mrs. Musgrove protests solemnly that she knew nothing of the matter. We are all very well pleased, however; for though it is not equal to her marrying Captain Wentworth, it is infinitely better than Charles Hayter; and Mr. Musgrove has written his consent, and Captain Benwick is expected to-day. Mrs. Harville says her husband feels a good deal on his poor sister's account; but, however, Louisa is a great favourite with both. Indeed, Mrs. Harville and I quite agree that we love her the better for having nursed her. Charles wonders what Captain Wentworth will say; but if you remember, I never thought him attached to Louisa; I never could see anything of it. And this is the end, you see, of Captain Benwick's being supposed to be an admirer of yours. How Charles could take such a thing into his head was always incomprehensible to me. I hope he will be more agreeable now.

Certainly not a great match for Louisa Musgrove, but a million times better than marrying among the Hayters."

Admiral Croft is an "old tough," as admirals seem to have been called in those days, drawn evidently from the life by one who knew the navy well. When interrogated about the state of a friend, who it was suspected had been wounded in his affections, he reassures the inquirer by telling him that the supposed sufferer had not used a single oath. His wife, as seems to have been the fashion at that time, has been a great deal at sea with him; she is a female "old tough"; and the picture of their strong though refined affection, drawn evidently with hearty relish by Jane Austen, is an "old maid's" tribute to the better state.

It has been already said that there are some weaknesses in the construction of the novel. Sir Walter Elliot and Elizabeth, though they occupy a good deal of space, contribute nothing or hardly anything to the action. They are a little too like the mere character pictures with which we are sometimes presented in place of characters brought into play and developed by the action of a well-constructed plot. Louisa Musgrove on one side, and Mr. William Elliot on the other, serve to add to the complexity and interest of the movement by which Captain Wentworth is to be reunited to Anne. But the destruction of William Elliot's character is needless, and strikes us as inartistic, while there is something unnatural in his whole relation to the Elliot family, and something strained in the account of his motives. The purpose for which he is introduced and afterwards killed

off is too obvious. The transfer of Louisa Musgrove from Captain Wentworth to Captain Benwick, again, is abrupt, and forced as well as sudden; nor does Captain Wentworth come quite clear out of the affair. The description of Mrs. Clay's artfulness, and of her sinister relation to the foolish baronet, leads us to expect something lively in that quarter; but nothing comes, and Mrs. Clay leaves the scene at last a "pale and ineffectual" figure, without our being able to see with what object she was brought upon it. Nor does Lady Russell, though she seems intended for an important part, do much more than solemnly seal by her ultimate approbation the match which she had made a grand mistake in breaking off.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was natural that any one who had a manuscript of Jane Austen in his possession should feel bound to give it to the world. But Jane Austen herself did not give "Lady Susan" to the world, nor can we imagine that she would have approved or that she would not have earnestly deprecated its publication. It is due to her to remember that before her death she was removed from Chawton to Winchester for medical advice, leaving her papers no doubt at Chawton, so that she could hardly have the opportunity in her last moments of making a selection, or of destroying those which she did not wish to see the light. "Lady Susan" is believed by her family to have been a very early production. We are willing to see in it a mere exercise which, when her taste had improved, was laid aside. "Lady Susan" is a novelette in the form of letters. It is truncated in shape, though after a fashion it is complete. The story which it briefly and not very clearly tells, is that of a worthless though clever and fascinating woman who carries on two love intrigues at once, one with a married man, while in the case of the other she is eventually supplanted in her lover's affections by her own daughter.

She is at the same time cruelly ill-treating her daughter, and trying to force upon her as a husband a man whom she hates. With that man, her two intrigues having clashed and been wrecked by the collision, "Lady Susan" ultimately herself takes up. Such a plot is worthy of a Parisian novelist. Yet in reading "Lady Susan," though you are surprised and repelled, you do not in the least feel that the tastes or tendencies of the writer are immoral. The very coldness and lifelessness of the story preclude any imputation of that kind. The work, we repeat, is best characterized as a mere exercise. We have even thought that the plot may have been borrowed, and that, in the unattractive web, the woof alone may be Jane Austen's; the warp may have been the work of another hand. There is nothing that we can see in this production giving promise of the later works, unless the character of Lady Susan herself uniting charms with vices may be regarded as a crude and coarse germ of that of Mary Crawford.

"Sense and Sensibility" was at first, like "Lady Susan," composed in the form of letters. The authoress of "Evelina" adopted the same form. Both she and Jane Austen were no doubt following Richardson, whom Jane regarded with excessive admiration. We shudder at the thought that a form so awkward for narration, and so fruitful of prolixity and dulness, might have been that of all Jane Austen's works. One of its special defects is illustrated by "Lady Susan," the wicked woman of which is made to write letters revealing her own character and designs with an openness which, under a paternal government, might have brought her into the hands of

the police. Iago acknowledges his villany to himself, but he does not disclose it to anybody else, much less does he entrust the disclosure to the post-office. The "Nouvelle Heloïse" is not narrative or play of character; it is at most a series of situations giving occasion to effusions of sentiment.

It would be vain to ask that "Lady Susan" should not be included in future editions of Jane Austen's works; but such, if she could be heard, would certainly be the prayer of her shade.

"The Watsons" is the name given by those who published it to a fragment to which the writer had not given a name, and which she had not even divided into chapters. The water-mark on the paper indicates that it was written when she was living at Bath, and it appears to have been the only product of those years. Assuredly it is in the writer's mature style, and no girlish composition. It is evidently unelaborated as well as incomplete, but it promises well, and we lament that the writer did not finish it. Why she laid it aside is unknown: probably her work was interrupted by the social engagements of Bath, and she lost interest or the thread was broken. Her nephew's hypothesis is that she "became aware of the evil of having placed her heroine too low, in such a position of poverty and obscurity as, though not necessarily connected with vulgarity, has a sad tendency to degenerate into it, and therefore, like a singer who has begun on too low a note, she discontinued the strain." It must be admitted that Jane Austen was "genteel," not in the odious sense which the word now bears, but in

that which it bore in her own day. But the Watsons are gentlefolk; they go to a ball where they meet aristocracy, though they go in a friend's carriage, not in their own, and, though when aristocratic acquaintance call, Nanny and the early dinner rather put the ladies to shame. Emma Watson becomes an object of attention to a peer and to another man of independent fortune at the same time. It appears, from the outline of the plot which the writer confided to her sister, that Emma was to decline an offer of marriage from a peer, and to marry a most eligible clergyman. That the story was carrying her out of the region of gentility, therefore, can hardly have been Jane Austen's reason for laying it aside. "The Watsons," as Mr. Austen-Leigh remarks, cannot have been broken up for the purpose of using the materials in another fabric. Mrs. Robert Watson, with her vulgar airs of fashion, bears a strong resemblance to Mrs. Elton; a faint likeness to Henry Crawford, as a gay breaker of the hearts of women, may perhaps be traced in Tom Musgrove; and the querulous selfishness of Margaret foreshadows that of Mary Musgrove. No other affinities appear. Mr. Watson is, like Mr. Woodhouse, an invalid, but he is not a valetudinarian.

CHAPTER IX.

CRITICISM is becoming an art of saying fine things and there are really no fine things to be said about Jane Austen. There is no hidden meaning in her; no philosophy beneath the surface for profound scrutiny to bring to light; nothing calling in any way for elaborate interpretation. We read in a recent critique of a work of fiction by Balzac, "Séraphita, the marvellous creature whose passage from Matter to Spirit, from the Specialist to the Divine conditions, is the theme of Balzac's genius, in this case is intended to typify the final function of a long course of steadfast upward working by a soul which has, by many reincarnations, won its way past the Instinctive and Abstractive spheres of existence, and has at length attained that delicate balance of the material and spiritual which is the last possible manifestation on the earthly plane." Jane Austen's characters typify nothing, for their doings and sayings are familiar and commonplace. Her genius is shown in making the familiar and commonplace intensely interesting and amusing. Perfect in her finish and full of delicate strokes of art, her works require to be read with attention, not skimmed as one skims many a novel, that they may be fully enjoyed.

But whoever reads them attentively will fully enjoy them without the help of a commentator.

Some think that they see a difference between the early and the later novels. It is natural to look for such a difference, but for ourselves we must confess that we see it not. In the first set and in the last set the style appears to us to be the same; in both equally clear, easy, and free from mannerism or peculiarity of any kind. In both there is the same freedom from anything like a straining after point and epigram, while point and epigram are not wanting when there is natural occasion for them. There are the same archness and the same quiet irony. The view of life, society, and character is essentially the same: at least, we should be surprised if any great contradiction or variation could be produced. It has been said that "Northanger Abbey" shows above all the rest of the novels the freshness and briskness of youth, and this has been ascribed to its having been out of the hands of the writer, so that it could not, like its fellows of the same epoch, undergo revision. It is, as we have shown, a comic travesty of the romantic school: to its satirical character its special friskiness is due. An autumnal mellowness of tone and sentiment has been discovered in "Persuasion." For this it has been already said there seems to be some foundation: it would be wonderful indeed if there were none. The sound of the vesper bell is sometimes heard. Perhaps there is something in the tender and suffering character of Anne Elliot congenial to the melancholy of the parting hour. Yet there are things fully as sharp and as nearly verging on cynicism in the later novels as in the

earlier. There is nothing more closely verging on cynicism in the whole series than the passage in "Persuasion" mocking the "large fat sighs" of Mrs. Musgrove over the early death of her worthless son.

There are novelists who seem to think that we can do without a plot, provided they give us elaborate delineations of character or even picturesque descriptions of scenery. But it is difficult, as we have already said, to create an interest in character apart from action; while picturesque descriptions of scenery, except as the merest accessories, become tedious, word-painting being, in fact, not painting at all, but a draft on the imagination of the reader, who has to put together a landscape in his mind's eye, out of the verbal materials furnished him, and soon grows weary of the effort. Walter Scott always gives us a good plot, a plot at least which carries us on and excites our interest in the actors. We have endeavoured to show by analysis that in this respect Jane Austen is not wanting, though in some of her plots there are weaknesses which we have had occasion to mark. It is true, we say once more, that her plots are very unlike those of a sensation novel. Where the sensation novel gives us murder, and perhaps carnage on a still larger scale, adulteries, bigamies, desperate adventures and hairbreadth escapes, she manages to amuse and almost to excite us with the scrape into which Emma gets by her attempt to make a match between Harriet and Mr. Elton, or the catastrophe produced by the sudden return of Sir Thomas Bertram in the midst of the theatricals at Mansfield Park.

Lord Brabourne has justly observed that the heroines of Jane Austen's novels are better than the heroes. It

could hardly fail to be so. It could hardly be given to men or women to understand the character of the other sex as thoroughly as that of their own. Shakespeare's women are inferior in interest to his men with the single exception of Lady Macbeth, who is more man than woman, though she betrays her womanhood by breaking down at last under the moral strain of conscious guilt, while nothing can pierce her consort's heart but the sword of Macduff. The phrase "heroes and heroines" is objectionable in the case of novels in which there is nothing heroic. But the principal figure, to use a more suitable phrase, in each of Jane Austen's novels is not a man, but a woman or a pair of women; in "Pride and Prejudice" Elizabeth, in "Sense and Sensibility" the sisters Elinor and Marianne, in "Northanger Abbey" Catherine Morland, in "Emma" Miss Woodhouse, in "Mansfield Park" Fanny Price, in "Persuasion" Anne Elliot. Each of them has a very distinct character, with a charm of its own, and is, we have no doubt, a true woman. Of the principal male figures hardly one can be said to have a very distinct character except Darcy, and Darcy, as we have seen, is made to do and say things which no man of his supposed character and sense would do or say. Edward Ferrars hardly has a character at all. There is nothing very marked in those of Henry Tilney or Edmund Bertram; nor does either of them, or any one of the whole set, play any part which specially calls for the male forces, qualities, or passions. Female critics greatly admire Knightley, but the interest which we feel in Knightley is derived not so much from anything striking

in himself or in the part which he plays, as from his being the natural supplement of Emma, the corrective of her little faults and the support to which her charming weakness clings. After all, the manufacture of heroes is difficult. Perfection does not interest. Of all Scott's heroes not one is interesting except the Master of Ravenswood, and in his case the interest is not so much that of character as that of circumstance. It is in the secondary characters of Jane Austen, the imperfect, the comic, and even the bad that we delight. That the comic characters are sometimes overdrawn has been already admitted, and the apology has been given. There never was a Tartuffe or a M. Jourdain any more than there was a Mr. Collins or a Mr. Woodhouse, a General Tilney or a Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and there is a basis in human nature for the comic characters of Jane Austen as well as for the comic characters of Molière.

It is marvellous that Jane Austen's range being so narrow she should have been able to produce such variety. But narrow we must remember her range was, and recurrences or partial recurrences of the same characters and incidents are the consequence. We cannot help seeing the likeness between Henry Tilney and Edmund Bertram, while Edward Ferrars is a feeble germ of both. We have several pairs of sisters, and sisterly affection is a constant theme. There is a close resemblance between Wickham and Willoughby, and a considerable resemblance between both of them and Henry Crawford. To say this may seem to be flying in the face of Macaulay, who has said, "She [Jane Austen] has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain

sense, commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. There are, for example, four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom—Mr. Edward Ferrars, Mr. Henry Tilney, Mr. Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class. They have all been liberally educated. They all lie under the restraints of the same sacred profession. They are all young. They are all in love. Not one of them has any hobby-horse, to use the phrase of Sterne. Not one has a ruling passion, such as we read of in Pope. Who would not have expected them to be insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Harpagon is not more unlike to Jourdain, Joseph Surface is not more unlike to Sir Lucius O'Trigger, than every one of Miss Austen's young divines to all his reverend brethren. And almost all this is done by touches so delicate, that they elude analysis, that they defy the powers of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed." But this eulogy, with all deference be it said, however eloquent, will not bear comparison with the facts. Henry Tilney shines more in small talk than Edmund Bertram, and his figure catches some of the special liveliness which pervades the travesty; but otherwise the two characters might be transposed without injury to either novel. Mr. Elton, on the other hand, the clerical idol of school-girls, essentially low and mean, with his vulgar and flashy wife, is distinguished from Henry and Edmund by the broadest difference of

colour which Jane Austen's palette could supply. It may be added that neither Henry Tilney nor Edmund Bertram belongs to the middle class; both of them belong to the aristocracy, though each is a younger son.

In doing justice to Jane Austen and recommending her in preference to the unwholesome products of sensationalism and the careless manufactures of literary hacks, we do not mean to take a leaf from the crown of those who have dealt with nobler and more entrancing themes. The subjects which presented themselves to her were of the kind with which, and with which alone, she was singularly qualified by her peculiar temperament as well as by her special gifts and her social circumstances to deal. But the lives of these genteel idlers after all were necessarily somewhat vapid, and void of anything heroic in action or feeling as well as of violent passion or tragic crime. Few sets of people, perhaps, ever did less for humanity or exercised less influence on its progress than the denizens of Mansfield Park and Pemberley, Longbourn and Hartfield, in Jane Austen's day. As they all come before us at the fall of the curtain, we feel that they, their lives and loves, their little intrigues, their petty quarrels, and their drawing-room adventures, are the lightest of bubbles on the great stream of existence, though it is a bubble which has been made bright for ever by the genius of Jane Austen.

THE END.

JANE AUSTEN'S CHRONOLOGICAL RELATION TO THE OTHER ENGLISH NOVELISTS WILL BE SEEN FROM THE FOLLOWING TABLE.

DANIEL DEFOE	[1661–1731]	"Captain Singleton" (1720), "Moll Flanders" (1722), "Colonel Jack" (1722), "Roxana" (1724).
SAMUEL RICHARDSON	[1689–1761]	"Pamela" (1740), "Clarissa Harlowe" (1749).
HENRY FIELDING	[1707–1754]	"Joseph Andrews" (1742), "Tom Jones" (1749).
LAURENCE STERNE	[1713–1768]	"Tristram Shandy" (1759).
HORACE WALPOLE	[1717–1797]	"Castle of Otranto" (1765).
HENRY MACKENZIE	[1745–1831]	"The Man of Feeling" (1771).
MRS. INCHBALD	[1753–1821]	"A Simple Story" (1791), "Nature and Art" (1796).
MME D'ARBLAY (Frances Burney)	[1752–1840]	"Evelina" (1778), "Cecilia" (1782), "Camilla," (1796).
MRS. RADCLIFFE	[1764–1823]	"The Sicilian Romance" (1790), "Mysteries of Udolpho" (1794).
MARIA EDGEWORTH	[1767–1849]	"Castle Rackrent" (1800), "Belinda" (1801).
SIR WALTER SCOTT	[1771–1832]	"Waverley" (1814), "Guy Mannering" (1815).
JANE AUSTEN	[1775–1817]	"Sense and Sensibility" (1811), "Pride and Prejudice" (1812).
JANE PORTER	[1776–1850]	"Thaddeus of Warsaw" (1803), "The Scottish Chiefs" (1810).
SUSAN E. FERRIER	[1782–1854]	"Marriage" (1818), "The Inheritance" (1824).
LADY MORGAN	[1783–1859]	"The Wild Irish Girl" (1801), "St. Clair" (1810).

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